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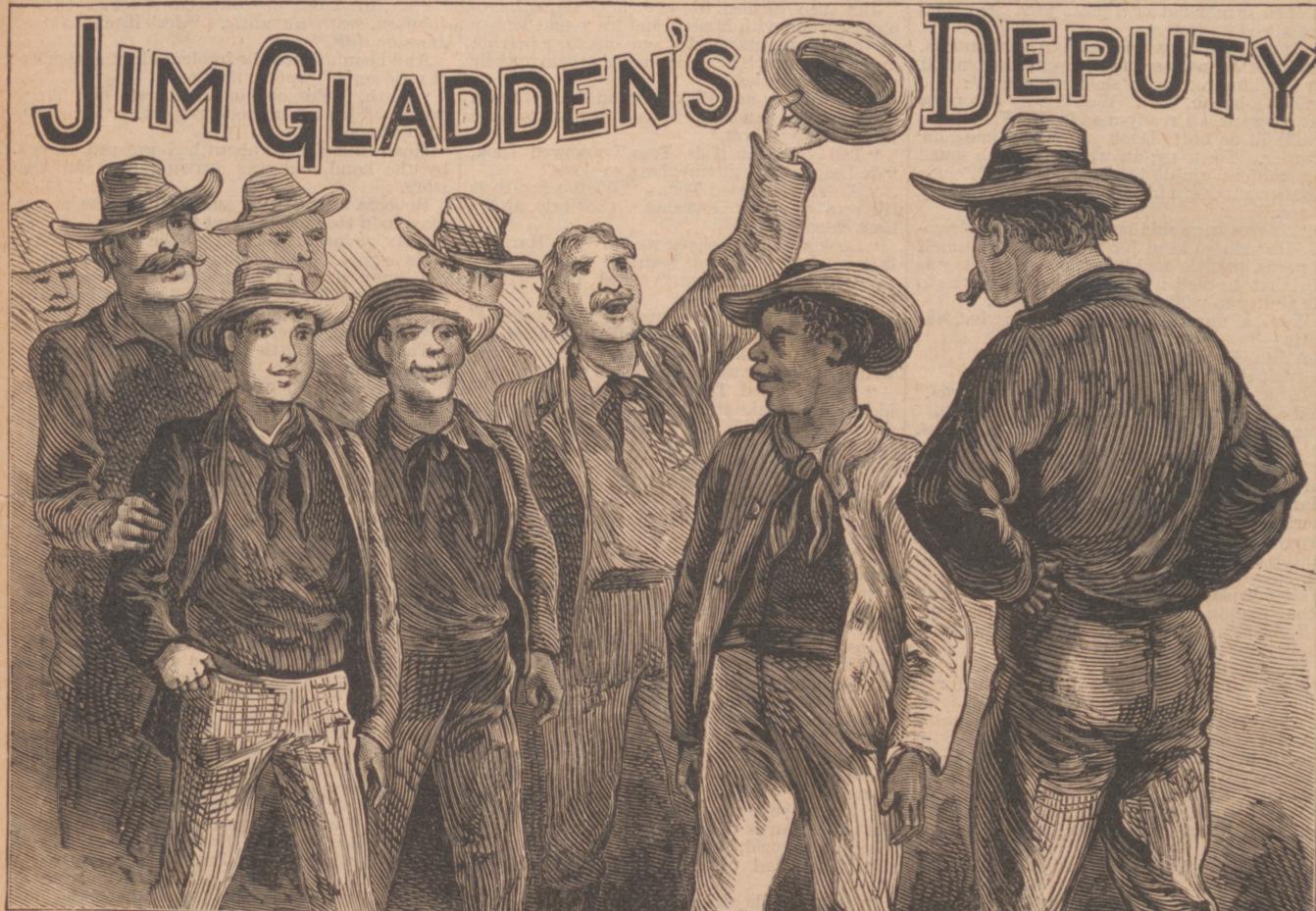
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OR,

The Jolly Pards' All-For-Love
Campaign.

A Romance of the Golden State.

BY PHILIP S. WARNE,
AUTHOR OF "PATENT-LEATHER JOE," "CAPTAIN
ARIZONA," "LITTLE AH SIN," "THREE
JOLLY PARDS," ETC., ETC.

1920
CHAPTER I.

DEPUTY MARSHAL KEENE.

PADDY'S FLAT "had done herself proud!"
She had a regular political organization. Jim
Gladden had been elected marshal, or, as the
boys put it, "chief cook an' bottle-washer."
But what the solid citizens especially plumed

"THREE CHEERS FOR THE THREE JOLLY PARDS!" YELLED A FELLOW WITH A VOICE
LIKE A BUFFALO BULL.

themselves on, was the fact that the camp had been included in the circuit of Judge Owney Maglochlin, and they were to have "Court Week" there, as big as life!

"Now, gents," said Jim, in his address to his fellow-townspeople, after he had been duly installed in office, "t'ings has been runnin' purty loose an' keerless in this hyar burgh; an' it don't stan' to reason that a bronco as has had his head all along is goin' fur to buckle down to stiddy business all to once, without nary kickin'. But it's a tight rein as fetches 'em; an' that thar's the keerd what I propose to lead off at ye.

Now, what I want in the way o' backin', is a posse what'll jest take the shine off'n ary constable's squad in this hyar section. I want live men an' squar' men—men as won't be the fu'st to break the law what they're supposed to uphold the majesty of.

"Don't all speak to once. Ye're an ornery lot—an' that'll wash! Jest you stan' up in a row tell I look ye over, an' see ef thar's ary pickin' as'll do fur to present to the judge when he honors this hyar town with his fu'st grand layout."

The "boys" took the uncomplimentary frankness of their marshal as a good joke. One and all admitted its justice.

But the demand was scarcely out of his mouth, when Dick Johnson sprung forward and cut off their laughing retorts by shouting eagerly:

"Look a-hyeah, boss! We's got jis' dat posse what ya want, all ready-made! De Free Jolly Pards'll fill de bill! Don't you waste time goin' no furder. Tie to us; an' we'll hab sich a squad o' rascallions 'gin' de jedge come, dat he'll clude to settle right down hyeah, an' go into a stiddy business."

Dick's eyes were shining and his ivories gleaming. He was so keen for the honor for himself and pards, that he couldn't keep still. It was plain that he had not the remotest doubt as to their ability to "fill the bill," as he said.

"Waal, ef unadulterated cheek was what was wantin'—"

But Jim Gladden got no further.

A great shout arose, drowning his voice.

"Three cheers fur the Three Jolly Pards!" yelled a fellow with a voice like a buffalo bull.

The conceit took like fire in the prairie grass. The crowd yelled, with laughter, pushing forward two boys, but little if any older than Dick—all yet in their teens.

Harry Keene was as fine a specimen of Young America as you would find in many a day's journey; and Tom Murphy had all the best qualities of the Emerald Isle wrapped up in his skin.

Harry displayed some modest embarrassment at thus having "greatness thrust upon him"; but Tom spit in the palm of his hand, and brandishing a sprig o' shillaly, cried:

"We'll do it, be gob!"

"Put wan o' the young divils an' the force, annyways!" shouted an Irishman. "What do ye want better than Harry Keene, I dunno? Wasn't it him as beat Cale Burchard an' Bow-legged Banty out o' their boots, bod luck till the palpeans?"

"Keene! Keene! Keene!" shouted the crowd.

"Waal, gents, ef I make him my deputy, you'll have to serve under him," announced Jim Gladden.

His eyes lighted as they rested on the boy. It was plain that he was more than half willing to fall in with the whim of the crowd.

"Chalk him down! We'll serve fast enough."

"Step this way, Deputy Keene!" Gladden ordered.

With his cheeks flaming with embarrassment, but his eyes flashing with gratified pride, Harry stepped to the side of his superior officer.

His pards went wild. There was not a spark of envy in their composition.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" they yelled, swiving their hats about their heads.

Whatever honors came to one of the League was reflected on all.

"Speech! Speech!" cried the laughing miners.

Harry took off his hat, and coughed, and shifted his weight restlessly from one foot to the other; looked up and looked down, and strove to gather his scattered wits.

"Stand up on the stump!" cried one on the outskirts of the crowd, who was craning his neck over the heads of those before him.

A couple of men seized the young deputy by the arm on either side, and lifted him upon the stump.

"Howld on, gints!" shouted Tom Murphy. "I have a nomination to put before the convention. Thayre stands the next Mugwump candidate fur the Prisidency! Anything to beat Blaine!"

This sally was greeted with general laughter, which gave Harry time to collect himself.

Like all true heroes, he was modest, but not so modest as to allow himself to be overcome. He was master of the situation.

"Gentlemen!" he said, "I reckon you've put me onto this thing for a lark; but if it proves that there are any rogues in this camp, I'll try not to let them have all the laughing on their side."

"Sure fur you, me b'y! Ar' what air yez wantin' to beat that, faith?"

"Boy or no boy, he wears a man's clo's!"

And, indeed, young as he was, Harry Keene's figure was filling out finely; and what he fell short of the stature of manhood he made up in litheness.

Of late—for a reason which will presently appear—he had been watching the growth of an adolescent mustache with impatience.

The full complement of Jim Gladden's posse having been made up, arrangements were at once made for the building of a "caboose," which Jim stipulated should have the qualities of a "buncomb" fence—that it should be "hoss-high, bull-strong and pig-tight."

Jim then formed his men into a squad, two and two, and with himself and his young deputy at their head, marched them off to a private meeting, in which he could instruct them in their prospective duties.

Tom Murphy and Dick Johnson thus left with time on their hands, hit upon a project to give their pard a "boost."

"Tell ye what it is, Tom," observed Dick, "de League ain't gittin' along so slow!"

"Slow!" reiterated Tom. "We'll stick to it till wan av uz is Governor o' the State, at the least calculation."

"Look a-hyeah!—s'pose we 'uns gib Harry a little send off wid de ole man?"

"Wid ould Abraham?" asked Tom, with a laugh.

"Yes. Ki-yi! won't *somebody's* eyes shine?"

Dick's own eyes shone, and he rubbed his hands and smacked his lips as if in sympathy with a rare treat that awaited his pard.

"Faith!" cried Tom, "catching on" to the idea, "we'll make the ould buck salute the new deputy mairshal!"

They ran off down the street to a store where clothing hung from the ceiling in a way that left no room for doubt that the proprietor was a Jew.

Abraham, a typical son of the race, awaited them at the door.

"Yo'ng shentlemens," he said, bowing and smiling and rubbing his hands cordially, "I am always glad to see you—you know dot! Come in! come in! Vat shall I show you dis mornin'?"

Instead of accepting his extended hand, Dick threw himself into an exaggerated attitude of one standing with his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, and said, with affected hauteur:

"Keep yo' distance, ole chap! We-'uns ain't 'lowin' no mo' familiarity."

"Vat now?" asked Abraham, shrugging his shoulders and smiling—knowing that it was some joke.

"Maybe ye're so ignorant as not to be knowin' that the Pards o' Paddy's Flat have taken a rise in the world," said Tom.

"I am glad of dot!" Abraham declared—"very glad!"

"Come in de sto'. Harry up hyeah!" cried Dick, hustling the Hebrew into his own establishment.

And though their mysterious actions piqued the old Israelite's curiosity, they would tell him nothing of its significance for the present.

While they were talking, a curtain which closed a doorway in the rear end of the store was put aside, and a wrinkled old Jewess joined them.

A little later the curtain was again agitated, as if by a slight disturbance of the air, but one of keen vision might have detected a bright eye peering through an interstice.

The boys excited the curiosity of the old folks, and also that of the person hidden by the curtain, to the highest pitch, until Dick, who had been keeping mysterious watch at the door, suddenly cried:

"Hear he comes! Now fur it!"

"It's a hat ye're wantin'!" cried Tom.

And catching up the nearest at hand, he clapped it on the old Jew's head, and so hustled him out of doors.

"Do yez see him?" he cried, pointing down the street, where Harry was in sight, walking that way. "How proudly he steps!"

"Mister Keene!" said old Abraham, with a smile of glad affection.

"The Deputy Mairshal o' Paddy's Flat!" said Tom, impressively.

"Free cheers fur de Deppity Marshal!" shouted Dick. "Raise 'er, ole man!—raise 'er!"

And, by the instance of the boys, old Abraham swung his hat and cheered in a voice cracked with age; while Rebecca*, kept bowing and smiling like the good old soul she was.

Back in the store the curtain was for a moment pushed aside, and the most beautiful face the eye need wish to rest upon appeared to view. What an eager light there was in the large, almond-shaped eyes! What exquisite roses bloomed in cheeks like the heart of an ocean shell! And never sweeter lips fell apart with wondering delight!

Boy or man, whoever could bring such a look to such a face, was to be congratulated!

CHAPTER II.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

"You chaps clear out of here!" ordered Harry, as he came up.

However, it was plain that it was modesty, and not real annoyance, that prompted his affection of brusqueness.

"Ki! ain't dat de policeman?" laughed Dick Johnson, with an antic. "Jes' listen to dat. *Move on dat!*"

And he mimicked the insolent air of authority of a Bowery "cop" to the life.

"Faith, we're obeyin' ordthers!" said Tom, taking off his hat in mock respect. "Long life til yer honor!"

Meanwhile old Abraham had grasped Harry by the hand, and was drawing him into the store.

Rebecca kept bowing and smiling, like a toy mandarin that has been set to rocking.

"My yo'ng frient!" cried the Jew, heartily, "dis is goot. Dot is a brave yo'ng mans vat is a debudy marshal before he is old enough to vote. Come in! come in! Dot vas an honor to my house to haf you—"

"Hold on, Uncle Abraham!" cried Harry. "That'll do. A little of that sort of thing goes a great way."

However, he allowed the old man to lead him through the store into the back room, the door to which, as we have said, was closed by a curtain.

Here he was in the sanctuary of the old Jew's home. He was the only person in Paddy's Flat who had ever been admitted to that apartment.

It was evidently a dining-room and living-room combined. The furniture was of the simplest sort—a plain deal table and some wooden-bottomed chairs.

But everything was scrupulously clean. The bare floor was as white as the holy-stoned deck of a man-of-war.

On the table, a piece of muslin, as fine and soft as gossamer, lay in a crumpled heap, so that its shape could not be made out.

Harry's eye fixed upon this dainty bit of woman's fabric, after a flash of eager expectancy about the room. To him, the glistening needle sticking in the work, and a golden thimble so small that a fairy might have worn it, were objects of sentimental interest.

"Miriam! Miriam!" called the old Jew.

"Papa!" came the response from above stairs.

The voice was—to Harry, at least—like a chime of silver bells. But there was a tremor in it which would have given a delicious sensation, if he had known more about the coy sex.

The fact was that, on learning of his approach, Miss Miriam had scuttled up-stairs like a frightened fawn, to stand breathless and trembling, with her hands pressed upon her fluttering bosom, her lips apart, and her eyes glistening, waiting for the sound of his step.

"Come here! Make the stairs down—*kvick!*" cried the old man.

There was the sound of light steps on the stairs; the curtain of figured calico was pulled aside; and a young girl stood framed in the rude setting.

Never such dark eyes, such red lips, cheeks such exquisite loveliness, greeted the eager eyes of a lover!

A word will inform the reader of the relation of these two in particular, and of the other characters of this drama in general.

For a long time the existence of this lovely girl in the home of the old Jew merchant had been a profound secret.

That her health might not suffer from the unnatural confinement, old Abraham had every day taken her out for a donkey-back ride, her youthful figure disguised to resemble that of

*See Half-Dime No. 480. "The Three Jolly Pards."

his round-shouldered old wife, and her pretty face hidden from the sight of men by a thick black veil.

Out among the crags, she could throw this veil aside, and enjoy an hour of unrestrained freedom.

When this secret was betrayed to the world by the machinations of two precious scamps, known as Cale Burchard and Bowlegged Banty, whose evil designs were frustrated by the Three Jolly Pards, old Abraham said that he had resorted to the trick to protect her from the rufianly fellows who would hold nothing sacred that belonged to a Jew.

But a subsequent fact seemed inconsistent with this explanation. Even after the revelation, the girl still wore the same disguise; so that, on seeing the round-shouldered and deeply-vailed figure that rode beside the old Jew, no one could tell whether the disguise hid the blooming beauty of the maiden, or the shriveling ugliness of the beldam.

But now, as he gazed at her face to face, Harry Keene held his breath with delight. And she?—she blushed divinely, yet with the instinct of maiden modesty affected surprise at finding him there.

“Vat haf ve here?” cried old Abraham, playfully.

“It is de bafe shentleman, Meestar Keene!” she replied, advancing with the pliant grace with which a timid animal draws near to one who is wooing it with outstretched hand.

She did not offer her hand; but, stopping at quite a distance from Harry, dropped him a pretty little courtesy.

“It is de Depudy Marshal of Patty’s Flat!” announced the old Hebrew, proudly.

“The deputy marshal!” repeated the girl under her breath.

She lifted her daintily-curved eyebrows as if this were a surprise.

An instant her dark eyes flashed keen admiration at the youth who stood almost as rosy as herself before her; then the long silken lashes again swept her cheeks.

“It is a great man that has come to us,” she said.

At this instant a sharp note on the gong over the store door summoned old Abraham to business.

“It is a customer!” he cried, with breathless eagerness, and scuffed away in slipshod haste.

Out in the store he could be heard perjuring himself, all in the way of “business,” in his eager assurance that some shoddy goods from Connecticut were the “latest imbordation from Baris!”

Presently he shouted:

“Rebecca! Rebecca! Come here!—come kvick!”

And the old lady went to play her part in the comedy.

Harry knew it all by heart. He had been a victim of the old skinner’s arts, having the back of his coat puckered up while he looked at the front, and the front puckered up while he looked at the back, to prove that “anyway you look at it, dot fit you shust like de paper on de vall!” He too had old Rebecca summoned, to stand and gaze, throwing up her hands in mute admiration, thus abetting the most barefaced representations of fact—all in the way of business, which, even on Wall street, or among the big stores on Sixth avenue, cover a multitude of windles.

But for once in his life Harry blessed the old Shylock’s eagerness to make a sale.

He turned to the girl who had been left alone with him.

She was stitching like lightning—or would have done so, if her thread had not suddenly betrayed an odd propensity to get tangled.

Her head was bowed so low over her work that he could only see her hightened color, without being able to make out the expression of her face.

“Miriam!” he said, in a low, wooing voice.

She stopped all motion, save a perceptible mor. He could see the quick rise and fall of her bosom; and her fluttering breath agitated a dark tress that fell across her cheek.

“Miriam!” he said again.

“I am glad that you receif de high office of hor, young shentleman!” she said, with sudden precipitancy, as if afraid of the silence with low voice vibrating through it.

“Don’t call me *young gentleman*,” he pleaded.

“Meestar Keene!” she corrected.

“That’s almost as bad as the other!” cried the boy. “Not that.”

“Vat then?” asked the girl, with a low, flutting laugh.

“Harry!—just Harry!”

Instead of complying, she dropped her head lower, in silence.

He could see her cheek dimple with a smile, the color coming and going rapidly.

“Won’t you call me Harry?—just once!” he pleaded.

She lifted her face, just so that he caught the flash of her eyes and the gleam of her white teeth, in a lightning glance.

Then it dropped over her work again.

There was an interval of dead silence, while he waited.

Finally, in a whisper so low that even the hungry ears of love could scarcely make out the articulations, he heard his name.

“Hahree!”

No one till he has heard his name uttered with a foreign accent, can know the charm that sweet lips lend to it.

It was followed, in this case, by a faint sigh; and then the girl suddenly hid her crimson face in the muslin on which she was at work.

Harry glanced at her with glistening eyes.

Dared he go further?

But, when did lover stop with such a confession?

“Miriam!” he said, again.

She did not respond; but he could see that she vibrated with the sound of his voice.

“Miriam!”

As if constrained, she lifted her face, and fixed her dark eyes upon him.

He held out his hand.

“Come!” he said.

“Oh, no! no!” she panted, breathlessly.

“Yes! I want to tell you something.”

She looked toward the doorway with its calico curtain. She listened.

“Oh, stow that gaff!” came in rough accents from the store. “Thar never was such doggone shoddy hung on a scarecrow; an’ you know it!”

“Ach! vat shall I say to you?” cried old Abraham, in despair. “You don’t see no such coat like dot on de Gofernor de State! Shust you look at dot clot! I gif you my oat’, dere don’t come no goots like dot in dis country since de var. Vere you see a coat like dot coat, eh? Dere ain’t a rinkle in dot coat—ask my wife!”

It was evident that there was no danger of interruption from *that* quarter. Old Abraham had forgotten his daughter and everything else, in the absorbing interest of a sale.

The lover still wooed, with burning look and outstretched hand.

“No! no!” the girl kept pleading, in a low, agitated voice.

Nevertheless, she rose, leaving her sewing on the table, and crossed the floor with the timid, hesitating steps of the fawn she so much resembled in grace and innocent shyness.

As a gazelle stretches its neck to snuff the hand held forth to it, so she, stopping at a distance, reached out her hand, to intrust her finger-tips to his clasp.

But, alas! when he held those rosy hostages, he began to draw her toward him, calling her tenderly by her name, as before:

“Miriam!”

“No! no! brave shentleman! kind shentleman!” she pleaded.

But he was remorseless, till his arm encircled her waist.

For a moment she hung over him as he drew her to his side. Her hair fell against his face. He heard her breath fluttering between her lips, and felt it warm upon his cheek. Then—

He scarcely knew what happened; but all in a flash she was away from him, back to the table, with her head bowed within the circle of her arms, and her face hidden from sight in the cambric she had been stitching.

Dizzy with delight, and without a word to her further, Harry went into the store, and passed through to the street, scarcely noticed by Abraham or Rebecca, the former of whom was absorbed in the beatitude of having the price of his last sale counted out to him, while his wife congratulated the customer on his bargain.

Like a frightened wraith, the girl fled to the sanctuary of her own chamber, there to shed the first tears of happy love.

And at this very instant a plot was in formation, looking to the wreck of all her hopes!

CHAPTER III.

A SLEEPING SON OF ABRAHAM.
PRESTO! We are a hundred miles away from Paddy’s Flat.

The scene opens in a mining-camp not far from Sutter’s Mill, where gold was first discovered.

“Hi! jest look at that feller thar!”

“That sheeny?”

“Yes.”

“Waal, I’ve seen better looking chaps nor him in my days.”

“But did you ever see any one that looked anythin’ like him?”

“About the nose? I should smile!”

“Blather! I’m talkin’ biz, I be.”

“Waal, they all look pretty much of a muchness to me. A sheeny’s a sheeny; an’ that’s all I kin make of it.”

“Look-a-hyar, Banty!—when I talk I’m a-sayin’ somethin’. I want you to take a squar’ squint at that snoozer, an’ say whether you ever seen his like before—a fam’ly resemblance, ye understand.”

The man addressed as Banty now turned for a serious scrutiny.

The subject of examination lay asleep in the sun, outside a saloon door. His clothes were ragged and dirty. They told one part of his life history plainly enough—rum and ruin.

But what was surprising in the circumstances was, that he was undoubtedly of the Hebrew race. What could have brought an Israelite to such a pass as this? Whatever their faults, the Hebrew seldom falls into such disrepute as marks the extreme degradation of other races of men.

This man’s hands were soft and well shaped. His curly black hair was fine and as glossy as jet. So was his beard, though sadly neglected. His features were good. One saw at a glance that it would take very little to turn him into a fine-looking man.

The men who stood staring at him were typical border ruffians. Both had a hang-dog look, but each after his kind.

Cale Burchard was a surly rascal, with a brow always black with a frown, and a lip always curling with a sneer.

Bowlegged Banty was of the order “slippery.” No contortion of his countenance betrayed his inward malignity. His voice was ever under perfect control.

They were a brace of scamps such as are sure to be “wanted” somewhere, as these two were at Paddy’s Flat.

It is needless to say that it was but for one purpose—to put them to the only occupation at which such chaps can be of benefit to the community—hemp-stretching.

“Waal, come to look him over,” said Banty, hesitatingly. “I’pears like I have seen him some’rs. But I don’t locate him, pard.”

“You never seen him before. No more did I.”

“Then what air ye shooting off your mouth about?”

“Stick to my text. Did you ever see anybody like him?”

“Like him? Nary rooster o’ that descrip. An’ yet, I kinder drop to him, too.”

“A woman for instance?”

“A which?”

“Or a gal?”

“Hang me if I hain’t!”

“Who?—who?” eagerly.

“The leetle cuss what slipped through our fingers at Paddy’s Flat.”

“The very picture of her!—eh?”

“Waal, I don’t see why we need git in a sweat about it.”

“Ye don’t, eh? Waal, I do!” and Cale Burchard’s brow contracted with one of his ugliest scowls.

He set to scratching his head in moody thought.

“The snoozer might be her brother, now,” he muttered, like a man feeling his way in the dark, “or her father, blast him!”

“Look-a-hyar, Cale!” cried Banty, “air you gittin’ maggots on the brain? You know as well as I do, that the gal’s got one father an’ one mother already. Then what—”

“So they say!” interrupted Cale, dryly.

Then he reached out and suddenly gripped his companion’s arm, as in a vise.

“Eh! What’s gone with you?” cried Banty, trying to shake off the uncomfortable grasp.

“I’m goin’ fur to git squar’!” cried Cale, with a ferocity fairly fiendish.

“Waal, don’t take it out o’ me!”

“Come! let’s take a look over the ground. What’s peculiar up thar at Paddy’s Flat—he?”

“The ole Shylock an’ that thar angel what he’s—”

“You bet! The flam what them gulls took in like new milk!”

“I low two galoots of about our size guzzled that—”

“We hitched on to her fur to levy toll on the ole man—”

“An’ got balked by three boys! S’pose we don’t say no more about that!”

"Hold on! *ho-o-o-old on*, says you! That that was the fu's trick. It's our deal this hyar time; an' ef we don't stock the keerds on 'em, jest you let us know!"

"Fix 'em to suit yerself."

"I mean to. We're goin' to have the leetle joker in this time."

"The joker?"

"Thar he lays. But, say!—what d'ye 'low they hid that gal fur, anyway?"

"Waal, Paddy's Flat ain't no place fur no young gal what ain't got a man tied to her, with a brace o' revolvers strapped to *him*! They lowed to keep her out o' the clutches o' jest sich likely fellers as you an' me."

"So they say!" repeated Cale, as dryly as before. "Waal, people will lie!"

"Eh? What did they hide her fur, then?"

"To keep her away from sich fellers as *him*!"

"No!"

Cale once more caught him by the wrist, and fetching his face close to that of his companion, said:

"Ye heyar me, pard! I'm goin' fur to git *squar!*"

And striding over to the sleeper, he clapped him unceremoniously on the shoulder, and shouted:

"Hi, stranger! Rout out o' hyar!"

CHAPTER IV.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

"Eh!" cried the sleeper, starting up in alarm. "We're wantin' o' you!"

"Hah! Vat you vant? It's better you don't makes no troubles mit me!" and springing up, the Hebrew struggled to free himself.

His hand went round to his hip with a readiness which bespoke familiarity with the life of that delectable region, but Cale caught him by the wrist, and prevented him from drawing the weapon.

"Hold on, pard!" he said. "We ain't discussin' with them things. Drop it!"

"Vat you do wit' me? I don't make nottinks wit' you!"

"Ef I wanted to hurt ye, I'd 'a' drove my knife through ye while ye slept! Simmer down, will ye? I want to have some business with ye?"

"Who are you? I don't know you!"

"Ye don't, eh? Waal, that's easy cured. Come in an' take somethin', an' we'll git better acquainted as we go along," and letting go the Israelite, he threw open the saloon door.

The Jew glanced suspiciously from one to the other of the hard-looking characters.

"Oh, it's all right," was Banty's assurance. "We're yer solid friends. We'll prove it, by puttin' some money in yer pocket."

"Monish!" repeated the Hebrew, in surprise; while his whole aspect changed.

In a physical struggle, these burly Europeans had him at a disadvantage, but when it came to money, he could hold his own, and in all probability turn the tables on them.

"You don't seem to be over-flush, at the present writin'," remarked Banty, with a grin and a glance at his disreputable wardrobe.

The Hebrew looked down at his shabby person.

"No," he said, warily. "I have no monish."

"But start ye with a dozen suspenders, an' in two months ye'd own a corner store!"

"We've got somethin' better to offer than suspenders," Cale suggested.

"We may reverse the order o' business, an' come to the suspenders at the end o' the trade!" supplemented Banty, with a wink.

Cale went to the table most distant from the few loungers who were waiting in melancholy silence, if not in sleep, the return of night, with its festivities.

He sat on one side of the table, Banty on the other with the stranger at the end.

Having ordered both cigars and liquor, Cale opened his business.

"Pard, I hail to the name o' Cale Burchard. Yan stumpy galoot is Bowlegged Banty. Now, what fur handle do you sport? Jakey?"

"Call me Jakey," answered the Hebrew, accepting this off-hand christening.

"That'll do as well as anythin' else," added Cale, as if a man's name were the least important part of his personality. "Now, Jakey, what's your business out in this hyar great an' glorious country?"

It was evident that Jakey had slept off his previous intoxication, if he had indeed been "how came ye so?" His wits were fully on the alert.

"We all come here for about de same t'ing," he said—"monish!"

"But we don't all propose to git it in the same

way," declared Cale, as if all ways were equally legitimate, with only a matter of taste between them.

"Some gits it with a *pick*, some with a *pack*, an' some with a *poke*," explained Banty, illustrating the last case with a suggestive manipulation of his bowie.

"Vell," said Jakey, with a mechanical laugh, to cover a shrewd contraction of the eyes, "I haf got some monish already mit a pack, but not de kind of a pack vat you're talkin' about."

It was plain that this was only a "feeler."

"Air you very partic'lar how you git the money, so long as you git it?" inquired Cale.

"Vat is your piness?" demanded Jakey, noncommittally.

"We want you to go in with us, an' lift one end of a box what's so heavy with gold-dust that two can't handle it."

Instead of exciting his cupidity, this speech had the effect of deepening Jakey's suspicions.

"Vat for you pick out a stancher for such a job as dot? You don't know me."

"So they say," answered Cale. "Suppose I tell ye about a chap what I do know?"

He straightened back in his chair, and fixed his eyes upon the Hebrew's face, as if to read the change of every line of it, as it was affected by what he said.

"Fur short," he proceeded, "let us call him Jakey. Waal, Jakey he lived in a big city in the States, on a street whar thar was a pile o' travel, you heyar me!"

The Hebrew gazed at his inquisitor with apprehension that he could not altogether hide. The blood slowly ebbed from his face. His eyes grew unsteady.

"Jakey," put in Banty, taking up the tale, "had a wife an' leetle one,—a gal kid, ye understand."

The Hebrew turned his head sharply, to meet this new and wholly unexpected attack.

Banty appeared to have said all that he had to say, and Cale resumed:

"The wife was a beauty, an' her child Waal, the kid took after Jakey. He wa'n't so bad fur looks; but he played hob with his wife, tell he got her under the sod—that's what's the matter with Jakey!"

A certain shrinking into himself showed how deeply the Hebrew was affected by this tale.

"The wife," pursued Cale, "was the idol o' the old folks; an' when they seen that Jakey had killed her—"

"Killed her!" repeated the Hebrew, starting back with a gasp, ghastly pale.

"Killed her!" reiterated Cale, in a cold, matter-of-fact tone, "then the old folks cleared out with the kid, an' Jakey hunted 'em like a bloodhound, but he didn't get onto 'em."

At this the Hebrew leaped to his feet, snatching out his revolver.

"Whoever you are," he said, in a low, fierce voice, which showed that he was a man fully able to take care of himself even in that wild country, "you will find dot Isaac Salomans is no coward; nor is he a child dot you shall play mit!"

Cale Burchard's whole manner changed. He now addressed this man, whom he had despised as a "sheeny," in the same tone that he would have used to a comrade.

"Set down, Salomans. I'm free to say that I like your style. I reckon we're about ready for business."

"Jakey didn't kill his wife," answered the Hebrew, half appealingly, half defiantly.

"Oh, no—not in any way that the law could take hold of," admitted Cale—"with kindness!"

The Jew sank back into his chair, and replaced his weapon, slowly.

"Who might you be?" he demanded. "How do you come to know about my affairs?"

"Never mind about that. The question is: Do you want to git your gal?"

There followed a long and anxious pause in which the Hebrew scanned his inquisitors narrowly.

"Your get-up is very clever!" said Salomans, recovering himself, and eying the others defiantly.

"Our which?" asked Banty.

"Are you from San Francisco?"

Both Cale and Banty stared at the speaker, and then looked at one another, for an explanation of his enigmatical words.

"Come off the perch, pard," said Cale, finally.

"What air you drivin' at, anyway?"

"Do you think I haf never seen detectives before?"

"Detectives! Waal, I sw'ar! Haw! haw!"

The two ruffians looked at each other, and went off in a roar.

"Waal, pard," responded Cale, after a while, "jest you look us over. I reckon a chap what's as sharp as you seem to be, will be able to judge whether we air detectives, or not."

Salomans coolly got up, and made a narrow examination of both the men before him.

"You are vat you look like on de outside," he said, finally. "Now, vat you vant mit me? You don't go to gif me nottinks mitout somet'inks for yourself."

"We're gittin' down to hard-pan, I see!" exclaimed Cale, straightening himself round for business. "Now, hyar's our leetle scheme. See how ye like it."

An animated discussion followed, in which the Hebrew became more and more interested, as his suspicions were allayed, and he was satisfied that these were really the rascals they appeared to be.

At the end he said:

"Done!"

And, clasping hands all round, in token of mutual support, they left the saloon in company.

CHAPTER V.

PUTTING UP A BLIND.

FIFTY miles from the scene just outlined, in the northern part of the State of California, was located a mining-camp called Sundown.

Into this camp came three miners, who, during the whole six months of their residence, were puzzles to every one else in the camp.

To begin with, they were never seen apart. Where one went, the other two unfailingly accompanied him.

Although all three had the look of men who never threw a glass of whisky over their shoulder, yet, when night came, they regularly went to the saloon, took a single drink, had a canteen filled to last them the next day, and never spent a cent more for liquor.

They never gambled, nor bet. They never seemed elated with good luck, nor cursed their bad luck.

Before they had been in the camp a week, they were dubbed "the Sunday School Class."

One night, for a lark, the boys swore that they were going to give the Sunday School Class a picnic; they should have one good square drunk, if they never had another.

Forming in a long, straggling line, they marched to the shanty in which the mysterious strangers "hung out," and "routed them out" with three rousing cheers and a "tigah."

Upon being informed of the treat that was tendered them, the strangers accepted, stipulating one condition—that their entertainers should drink glass for glass with them.

The popularity of this provision goes without saying.

By midnight the whole camp was roaring drunk, except the barkeeper and the guests of the occasion. By two o'clock they were all "under the table," to the last mother's son.

Then the Sunday School Class took a final drink with the barkeeper, and walked home to their shanty.

"Boys," said a representative man of Sundown, summarizing the general sentiment, "we're a sold community! If the Sunday School Class don't drink, it ain't because they don't know how!"

One day the Sunday School Class abandoned their claim, and left the camp, as abruptly as they had come.

No one knew any more about them than on the day of their arrival—whether they had made anything or not; who they were or what they were; what they had done or what they proposed to do; whence they had come or whither they went.

Two of them—Cale and Banty—were next seen in the southern part of the State.

They took up their abode at Jimson Bend, and deported themselves with a view to making friends.

It was generally conceded that they were good enough fellows, as fellows went, but bad dog's luck.

The boys stood by them, the more readily because of their manifest gratitude for the slightest favors, and reluctance to accept more than would relieve their absolute necessities.

Finally they threw up the game, and struck out on a prospecting trip, to see, they said, if that would break up their streak of infernal luck.

They had been gone two weeks, when a very brisk and business-like gentleman presented himself at the Bend.

We recognize in him our old friend Jakey.

He had been transformed. He was now a keen-eyed speculator, with a briskness which

promised that if he took hold of a thing, he would put it through with a rush.

At Jimson Bend there were three partners who had the reputation of having made one series of lucky strikes from the time they had passed the Golden Gate.

They were all ignorant men, who had reached middle life, working as common laborers. They now dreamed of dying bonanza kings.

The were running the best-paying mine in the camp. Three days after striking the place, Jakey had bought an eighth interest in the mine, and by his fluent tongue had impressed his new pards with the belief that he was a man with the breadth of ideas which would aid them in extending their enterprises to a scale justified by their wealth.

They discussed the matter among themselves. They would keep the business in their own hands, but would let him in just enough to profit by his shrewdness.

They were not the first men who have entered upon this game of wits, with an apparently "dead sure thing."

For a week these men lived in a fairy-land, in which Jakey possessed a magic wand. His head teemed with enterprises, the success of which he proved to a demonstration.

By the end of the week he had the three "in his pocket." He was their good genius. They only waited for him to decide among the abundance of good things that offered.

Then Banty returned to the camp alone.

He had come for provisions, he said, and he bought the simplest, figuring to eke out his scant store of gold dust.

He wore a very long face, talked but little, but that little to the effect that he and his pard were still pulling against the stream.

While he was making his purchases, Jakey entered the general store.

"Don't I see you before, my frient?" he asked, bowing and smiling as Banty turned to see who addressed him.

Banty stared at him without a sign of recognition.

"No!" he replied, with a frown.

And without more ado he gathered up his scant provisions and left the store.

The smile of Jakey's face merged into a look of intense keenness. His lips fell apart; his eyes contracted; he thrust his head forward like a hound scenting something in the air; as he stared after the departing Banty.

Then he cast a quick look about on the men, among whom was one of his pards. An instant his gaze lingered upon this man's eyes with an intensity that was a signal. Then he too passed out of the store, without a further word.

"What d'y make o' that?" asked one of the loungers.

"He has seen him. You bet yer pile on that."

"Whar?"

"How should I know? All I say is, Banty didn't want to know him."

"Why not?"

"Do ye think I'm a walkin' bureau of information? You'd better ask Banty."

"How's that, Mallory?"—addressing Jakey's pard.

"Faith! it's by me. Pitch the thrump yerself. But, come, b'y!—we'll clinch the nail, and then it's meself as'll be goin'."

Having drank a final good-luck, he lounged out, and sought his pards.

He found them and Jakey in a state of high excitement.

"Come in! come in!" cried the latter, almost dragging him into the shanty. "Ve haf not a minute to lose! There may be millions in it!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SECRET POCKET.

It was during one of those seasons of mania when any man, breakfasting with his pick and pan, a week's provisions, and enough gold-dust to assure him of sustenance for another week or two, would have refused to sell at any price his chance of making a ten-thousand-dollar strike before supper.

A rumor of a lucky find in any spot, was enough to cause a general stampede for the new digging for fifty miles round.

Under these circumstances Mallory found himself fairly dragged in among his excited pards, who gathered about him like flies about a molasses hoghead.

"Who was dot fellow?" asked Jakey, holding on to his pard as if he feared that he would get away without telling him.

"Who was it, Mallory? Any one we know?" urged the other two.

"That poor devil, Banty," replied Mallory.

"Poor teffle!" cried Jakey, scornfully. "Say rich teffle! He is fooling us all. Vat for is he speaking about, buying a little here, a little there? I saw him ten days ago at Cinnamon Bar, laying in supplies in a sly vay dot put me on to him. But he gave me the slip. Don't you see how he run away ven I challenged him? Now, I propose dot two of us trail him down. If he is as poor as he would haf us believe, all right—ve know it den!"

"Tim Buckley's the man fur ye, me boy!" cried Mallory, slapping one of his pards on the shoulder.

After an animated discussion, it was decided that Tim and Jakey should find out whether there was really anything mysterious about Banty's movements, while Mallory and Reddy Scully remained at work at home.

The first thing that Jakey directed Tim's attention to, was the undeniable fact that Banty was moving about with a covert watchfulness, as if to discover whether he was being "spotted."

"If he drops to us, ve're gone!" said Jakey, hastily drawing his companion behind a shanty, where they could see without being seen.

Then began a series of maneuvers by which the Hebrew seemed to prove his detective ability. He seemed to elude Banty's observation, at the same time keeping track of him.

When Banty left the camp, the spies were on his trail.

About noon on the following day he reached his destination, in the depths of a ravine which looked as if it had never before been visited by man.

He announced his approach by a shout, which was responded to; and a moment later Cale Burchard made his appearance, running and waving his hat about his head, while he cheered in a way that was too familiar in the mountain region to need interpretation.

"He's made a strike!" cried Jakey. "I'll bet you dot was a nugget! Look! look!"

Cale was evidently showing his companion something over which he seemed greatly excited and delighted. He capered about, and slapped Banty on the back, and pointed in the direction whence he had come.

Then Banty began to talk, while Cale sobered down. Soon he showed evidence of intense rage. He drew his revolver and flourished it about menacingly, while he looked back over Banty's trail.

"Vat you make of dot, eh?" cried Jakey, triumphantly to his companion.

"Well, I'm allowin' that min don't show so much fight over an impty hole!" said Tim, sententiously.

His eyes began to glow with greed, and his jaw took a pugnacious set. He looked like a man who had made up his mind to use whatever force was necessary to maintain his rights.

"Will we go in an' stake out a claim under their noses?" he asked.

"Ve'll see whether it's worth while first," said the Israelite. "I ain't throwing time away without knowing whether there's money in it. Keep at my elbow, and ve'll gif 'em a surprise-party!"

Cale and Banty went to a brush wickup built directly under a cliff.

Jakey and Tim moved forward, so as to present themselves at the opening of the rude structure before they were discovered.

"Good-day, shentlemen!" said Jakey, with a grin of triumph.

With startled oaths both the inmates whirled round to confront the intruders.

But they were too late, if secrecy was their purpose; for there in plain sight, so that the eyes of both the men looking in at the door fastened upon the spectacle with a gaze of greedy delight, was a hoard of gold-dust and nuggets displayed on a flat stone, which the prospectors evidently used as a table, for eating and playing cards upon.

"Blast yer eyes! What're ye doin' hyar?" cried Cale, whipping his hand round to his hip.

"That infernal sheeny!" fairly howled Banty, following the lead of his partner.

But Jakey took matters quite coolly.

"Hold on, shentlemen!" he said. "You will not be so foolish as to oferlook de fact dot I haf de drop on both of you. Ve come here in peace, ve go away in peace. But ve don't stand still v'le you blow the top of our heads off."

"You spied on me at Jimson Bend, an' you've tracked me hyar!" cried Banty.

"A fool would know dot," admitted Jakey.

"But dis is a free country—don't it?"

"I'll free ye, blast yer eyes!"

"It's a game that two can play at, me b'y!" said Tim, now "taking a hand."

Fume as they might, it was plain that both Cale and Banty saw that they were taken at a disadvantage.

They wisely refrained from drawing their weapons.

"Shust listen to reason," said Jakey. "You have got a good t'ing, and kept it quiet as long as possible. Dot was all right. Nobody blame you for dot. Ve drop to your little racket. Dot was our privilege."

"Now, maybe you'd like to plant us, and say not'ing more about it. You can't do dot little t'ing, my frients! Ve haf left a plain trail behind us, so dot, in case of an accident, if we don't turn up in two or three days, our pards vill drop in on you, and ask you vat you know about it! How you like dot?"

Cale and Banty growled roundly; but the Hebrew's shrewd arguments were unanswerable.

"Cheese it!" cried Cale, presently. "Thar ain't nothin' in this hand. It's your blasted keerlessness. I'll bet my pile that you've been on a fool drunk, an' give the thing away! I might a' known it u'd turn out so!"

Then followed a very natural quarrel between the discomfited pards.

Banty maintained his innocence stoutly; but Cale remained sullenly incredulous, even after Jakey confirmed Banty's statement.

"Waal, what do you propose to do about it?" asked Cale, sweeping their hoard of treasure into a buckskin bag.

"Vat is chenerally done in such circumstances," said Jakey. "Ve vant a finger in de pie."

"I reckon, now," said Cale, with a malignant scowl, "that you'll blow the thing; an' we'll have the hull State a-tumblin' in hyar inside of a week."

"Ve are not such fools as dot," said Jakey. "Ve take a little look around; and if ve like it, maybe ve come here on de quiet—my pards and me. It was shust so vell you take dot comfortably. You don't vant de whole vort."

On examination, it appeared that Cale and Banty had possession of a very peculiar spot, the conformation of which Jakey pointed out to his companion, discoursing upon "indications" and the "outcrop" and "strike" of rocks with great learning and volubility.

There had been a waterfall just at this point, which had drained a quite extensive valley, falling into a sort of bowl scooped out in the rock by the mighty forces of nature.

In the still waters of the pool thus formed, the gold washed down from above had opportunity to settle to the bottom. It was now filled with surface dirt from the amphitheater of surrounding cliffs, into which Cale and Banty had sunk a deep prospect hole, nearly to hard-pan, where they seemed to have found pay-dirt of unusual richness.

There was room for perhaps a dozen more promising claims in the pocket, though, as Jakey said, the original discoverers had far the best of it.

They staked out all that the mining regulations would allow them to claim, bought a shovel of Cale and Banty at an extravagant price to leave upon it, in token of ownership, and then departed to fetch their pards to the spot.

Jakey talked to Tim on their way back until he completely turned his head. Then he left him to descend on their wonderful luck to his pards.

The three pards had rather "taken Jakey in" in two senses. He had bought into a failing mine. It therefore now required little persuasion to induce them to sell the mine at Jimson Bend, which they were able to do to advantage.

Then they hied them to the new diggings, congratulating themselves on their lucky turn.

They found the place fairly swarming with men! Cale, it appeared, had gone to Cinnamon Bar, got on a drunk, and "blown" everything.

Worse yet, their claims had been jumped by men who had the resolution to hold onto them.

In vain did they urge their prior claim. As if out of revenge, Cale and Banty pretended that they knew nothing of any such claim; and those in possession declared that there had been no signs of anything of the kind when they entered upon the land.

Twelve stern-faced men stood around Cale and Banty, with looks which showed plainly their determination to hold out against all comers.

Having left Jimson Bend without "giving the thing away," Jakey and his pards had no friends to back them.

It was a game of freeze out, in which they had got nipped.

They drew apart for consultation.

CHAPTER VII.

"SOLD"—THE MINE, OR THE MINERS?

All the miners in the pocket now resumed their work, those who had recently started in pitching out the surface-dirt with a will, sure of the golden reward that awaited them at the bottom.

Cale and Banty, meanwhile, were elevating and washing pay-dirt.

The work went on merrily enough; but there was a look of quiet determination on the faces of all, as Jakey and his pards drew near, which showed that they would not bear interfering with.

There were a lot of men already on the ground, and others were constantly arriving, who could get no place in the pocket.

Some were staking out claims on the outside; others hung about the hole which had attracted them all to the spot, gazing wistfully at the lucky owners of the Last Chance—as Cale and his pard had called their mine.

The discussion that went on about the hole was of the most extravagant sort. Every one placed his estimate on the find; and every one had a story—each wilder than the last preceding—of lucky hits of a similar sort which had come under his personal notice.

Jakey and his pards gathered about Cale and Banty, and watched the process of washing.

To old miners it was not a difficult task to estimate fairly the yield; and this was rich enough to satisfy the most greedy.

"Pards," said Jakey, when they had retired beyond earshot, "suppose ye put in a bid for dot mine? Dere's monish in it—I tell you! Shust you come mit me. I show you somet'ing. I ha' kept my eyes open a leedle."

He took them about, showing them the lay of the land above, and proving how a rich deposit must be the inevitable result.

"Dey haven't got de best of dot yet," he said, confidently. "Wait till dey strike hard-pan! If we go in now, we can buy dot out for half vat it is worth."

After considerable discussion it was concluded to make an offer for the mine, allowing Jakey to do the negotiating.

They were willing to go as high as thirty thousand dollars, though all felt that that would be a bargain.

"Vell, shentlemen," said Jakey, presenting himself before his *real* pards, "we like to ha' a leedle business mit you."

"Our biz is right hyar, an' we're hard at it," said Cale, bluntly.

"Maybe you like to sell dot mine?"

"Sell nothin'! When you've got a good thing, keep it! That's my motto."

"But you are here like de rest of us—to make monish. Dot may play out in t'ree days. If you ha' a sure t'ing in your pocket, you can laugh at dot den."

"Play out?"

Cale gave a snort of disgust, and worked away the harder, not deigning a look at the man who dare insinuate anything to the discredit of the Last Chance.

"Dot's all right," insisted Jakey. "I ha' seen a man hang on to a t'ing, and come out of de leedle end of de horn. Vat you t'ink dot mine worth, eh?"

"It's worth a hundred thousand dollars!" said Cale, with the air of a man who was talking at random because he did not wish to be bothered. "It's worth a good deal more than you've got to pay fur it," he added, more soberly.

"You don't know dot," said Jakey, taking matters coolly. "Maybe your pardner ha' somet'ing to say about dot. Eh, my frient? Vat you t'ink?"

"Cale does the bargainin' fur this crowd," said Banty. "If he says sell, an' we kin git a fair stake, I say sell, too. But I ain't sweatin' fur it, yo' understand."

"Maybe it's better we go into your vickiup," suggested Jakey, "and we strike a leedle bar-gain, I bet you!"

Cale rose, balancing in his hand the dipper with which he had been at work, and looking at his pard undecidedly.

"What d'y'e say?"

"What do *you* say?"

"But it's our first strike, after the dirtiest luck that men ever had."

"It's the turn. We may drop onto somethin' jest as good ag'in."

"Dot's so!" interposed Jakey, eagerly. "I know a man vat had dot shust like you. Ach Gott! vat luck!"

And he threw up his hands and shook his head, as if it were past description.

"Vell, dot man he make it von day. Den he

sell dot oud; and dot company vat buy dot don't make a bloody cent out o' dot mine! But dot makes not'ing mit him. He has got his monish in his pockets, and he keeps it dere!"

But this was too plainly the invention of a man who was hungry for a bargain.

Cale seemed to accept it for what it was worth.

"Maybe we ought to stand by our luck," he said to Banty. "It's worth as much to us as to anybody."

"A bird in the hand don't turn any man's stomach," said Banty.

It was plain that he was for selling.

"Waal, come along, an' we'll talk it over, anyway," said Cale, seeming to come to a sudden decision.

Then Jakey smiled and fawned upon him. He tendered his canteen, as an opening ceremony.

"Waal, what's the thing worth to you?" asked Cale, when they were away from the curious crowd.

Then began a sharp match at chaffering. Jakey never relaxed his smile, except to throw up his hands and elevate his brows in amazement at the exorbitant expectations of the owners of the Last Chance.

It was a very good mine as mines went, no doubt. He wouldn't be trying to buy it if he didn't believe that. But then, there was a reasonable limit to everything. The yield might play out the very next day. It was as good as gambling to buy a mine of any sort, however promising.

"Put up fifty thousand ag'in' it, an' I'll play you fur the lot at draw poker!" cried Cale.

But Jakey wasn't a gambling man. He was on the buy, fair and square. He would pay them twenty-five thousand cash in hand, and relieve them of all risk.

Cale declared that he'd see Jakey and his crowd in exceedingly uncomfortable quarters before he'd throw the thing away for any such money.

"It's plain that we can't trade with you, gents," he said. "An' you bet yer bottom dollar we don't propose to throw away any more time chinmin' with ye, neither! Come along, Banty!"

And they walked off like men who had been robbed of just so much precious time to no purpose.

Jakey was left with his pards.

"It's no go," he said. "We'll have to come down mit dot t'irty thousand; and maybe dot won't fetch it."

The pards were now eager at thirty thousand. The thing began to look more and more valuable as it promised to slip through their fingers.

They went over the ground again. Jakey enlarged on all the points.

"If I had dot monish of my own," he cried at last, slapping his thigh, "I don't stop at dot!"

"Faith, what'll we do if we don't strrike a dicker wid 'um?" asked Scully.

"We're sold out everywhere," said Tim, with a disconsolate look about.

"Go the thirty thousand," said Mallory.

"We said dot before," observed Jakey, with a smile.

"Blow me tight if I think thirty-five would be too much fur it!" declared Tim, with sudden resolution.

"Dot was vat I t'ink, if it was my monish," said Jakey; adding, modestly: "But you know, pards, dot I ha' so leedle to put in de t'ing. I go my pile on it."

And he shrugged his shoulders, as who would say:

"Can I do more?"

"Fifteen hundred," he added. "Dot make me less than vone twentieth. You see, I don't stake so much as you. I don't like to urge you. If it don't turn out all right, you come back on me, and blame me for dot I crowd you into it."

But at the slightest hint at a failure of the mine, those whom he had coached so well a few minutes before championed it as vehemently as if it were already their own.

"Do yer best on thirty, Jakey," said Mallory. "Is that agreed, pards?"

They all agreed to that, with the implication that a raise of five more was to be made, if unavoidable.

On this understanding, Jakey resumed the battle; and now he seemed to lay himself out.

His pards all acquitted him of blame that the thirty thousand failed to "go." One and all agreed that they had never seen such dicking. But Cale and Banty had stood out with inflexible resolution.

Finally they began to show signs of throwing up the whole negotiation in a rage.

Then Jakey glanced at Mallory, as if to intimate that he had done all that could be done.

Mallory nodded, and Jakey then said:

"Shentlemen, ve gif you thirty-five thousand. Ve count out de monish. Off you like to take dot, all right."

"We don't want yer money! Clear out!" cried Cale.

Jakey coolly turned to his pards, as if no opposition had been made.

They, with considerable nervousness, removed broad belts, supported from the shoulders by straps like suspenders.

From them Jakey deliberately took a lot of little buckskin bags, and arranged them in rows on the stone table on which he and Tim had seen Cale's gold displayed, when they looked into the vickiup and surprised its occupants.

"Shentlemen," he then said, "there is a hundred and twenty-five pounds of gold-dust. How long vill it take you to dig dot much out of your mine?"

Banty stared greedily at the gold. There was need for dissimulation here. Cale, too, was unmistakably moved.

"What d'y'e say?" he cried, turning to Banty.

"Done!" said Banty.

"We may make a hundred thousand out of it!" urged Cale, but weakly.

"Done!" repeated Banty.

"Done!" reiterated Cale; striking his fist on the stone.

The gold was carefully weighed out, and the transfer completed before witnesses.

Then, and not till then, Jakey took off his hat, and swinging it about his head, said:

"Hip! hip!"

And catching the infection, his pards—Mallory and Buckley and Scully—yelled out a united cheer.

Cale and Banty could scarcely refrain from joining them!

"Waal, gents," said Cale, "now we've got this cl'ar, it's the only strike we've made sense we've been in the mines; an' I, fur one, am goin' to quit the business. I've made my pile—enough to keep me an' the ole woman comfortable fur the rest of our days—an' I propose to make a bee-line fur 'Frisco, before I lose what I've got."

Both he and Banty were supplied with horses. They put their gold in secure saddle-bags, and rode away.

Far out of reach of listening ears, Cale turned to his pard:

"Banty, ef they ever drop to him, Jakey's a goner!"

"We won't be thar!" was Banty's summing up of the situation.

Cale threw back his head with a hoarse laugh; and digging their spurs into their horses' flanks, they rode on like the wind.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PINCH OF SALT.

ALL went merrily at the new diggings for about twenty-four hours.

Then there was a sudden "drop," and a circle of eager faces gathered about the "long tom" with which Jakey and his three lucky pards were washing out the gold of their new venture.

"Pards," Jakey declared, solemnly, "dere ain't a grain since de last clean-up!"

The three lucky pards stood round with faces almost as long as the "tom," and looked down at the rifle-bars in mute dismay.

"Thayre must be *some*!" insisted Reddy Scully, presently, in a desperate tone.

"You see for yourself."

Mallory took the iron spoon, and scraped the ripples, though it was plain to be seen that they were clean.

"Run some more dirt through," suggested Tim Buckley.

And at the holding forth of this forlorn hope, which all secretly felt to be futile, the three rushed off to the hole, and fell to work like crazy men.

The crowd took the contagion, and added their efforts to those of the men immediately interested; and for twenty minutes that long tom was run to its full capacity.

The dirt washed out clean. There was not a "show of color."

The men who, the day before, had put thirty-five thousand dollars into the venture, with bounding hopes, now stared stupidly at the empty rifle-box! Sweat was streaming from their faces. They were as pale as death—as pale as the gambler who sees a fortune swept out of his grasp by the turn of a card!

In the dead bush that rested on the crowd, somebody uttered an ominous word.

"Salt!"

The pards looked up piteously, as if this verdict were cruel to them.

Jakey cried out, as in desperate protest:

"No, no! Dot can't be! See! dere is effery indication! Shust look at de lay of de land."

And as if his tongue were winged, he went over again the points he had called the attention of his pards to before the purchase.

"You've got everything hyar but the dust," said an old miner. "I low it fooled me. But I've seen the like o' this before in my time."

He turned to a group of men who had come up from Jimson Bend, and who, like himself, had helped Cale and Banty, when it seemed as if they were the victims of dog's luck.

"Gents," he said, coolly, "them scalawags has played roots on us, for a sure-enough fact. We air all in the same boat. Thar ain't no use hangin' out hyar no longer. The fu'st man back to Jimson Bend is the best off."

"But are we to be tuck in the loike o' this?" cried Reddy Scully, his face suddenly flaming as red as his hair.

The miner from the Bend shrugged his shoulders.

"The thing's done," he said, laconically.

But Jakey appeared fairly beside himself with rage.

"By shiminetta!" he cried, "dey don't do dot leetle t'ing. Ve haf horses like dem rascals! Ve go after dem, unt got dot monish back. Come, pard's!"

He ran away to where the horses were picketed, and frantically threw himself upon the back of the best of them, without stopping to put on the saddle.

During this exciting scene a squad of newcomers had made their appearance in the pocket.

They were met with the assurance that they might as well turn about without loss of time. The jig was up. They would find nothing there but a salted mine and a badly sold community.

"An' we dog-gone fools has hoofed it all the way from Sundown!" cried the leader of the newly-arrived gang, with comical ruefulness.

"Cale?—Banty?" he said, a moment later, catching the names from the random discussion that was going on about him. "What fur galoots was them—say, now."

On receiving their description, he looked at his comrades, and then threw his head back with a roar.

"The Sunday School Class!" he cried, as soon as he could fetch breath.

"You bet!" corroborated one of his companions.

"The which?" asked the miner from Jimson Bend.

"Waal, gents, they floored Sundown fur the whisky—beautiful! beautiful! But, say, didn't they have a sheeny along?"

"A sheeny?"

"Hello! Blow me, ef— Say, Toby, what's that?"

"As sure as a gun!"

"Ain't it, though?"

And the boss of the Sundown gang out with his revolver, and without a word further in explanation, let fly several shots in rapid succession.

"Hold on! What's this hyar? That's one o' the lucky pards you're a-pepperin'!"

"Lucky nothin'! it's cheek! After him, boys! He'll git away with a whole hide, as his pards has with the plunder!"

All was wild confusion. Jakey was dashing out of the pocket, plying heels and halter-strap and voice to goad his horse to its highest speed. The men from Sundown were sending a hail of bullets after him. The others stared open-mouthed, not comprehending the situation.

At last one "dropped."

"Why, it's a sell all round!" he cried. "That blasted sheeny was in with Cale an' Banty!"

"Ain't he though?" cried the Man from Sundown. "Have you got a hoss what'll ketch that thar one what he's a-straddlin'? I'll bet my pile you hain't."

"That's the best hoss in this section, stranger; an' I'll bet on it. I owned him myself."

"Good-by John!" said the Man from Sundown.

But the three lucky pards—Mallory, Buckley, and Scully—when they realized how badly they had been taken in, were frantic. Two of them got horses, while one of them ran afoot, giving headlong chase.

"Make yourselves easy, boys," said the Man from Sundown. "They'll be back when they git tired."

He proved a true prophet. Some hours later, long after nightfall, the defrauded men found their way back to the camp.

There was nothing lovely about them at their best. They were now savage with baffled rage.

Doggedly they listened to the little incident which the men of Sundown narrated with offend good nature.

"Boys," said Tim Buckley, between his set teeth, "I want somethin' jest now worse than I ever wanted the gold-dust. I want revenge!"

"An' we're the boys as'll have it!" cried Scully.

"So we will!" assented Mallory.

They clasped hands, as men bind themselves by oath.

"It's three ag'in' three!" said Scully.

"Whin we're done, may thayre be enough of us left to bury the last o' them!" said Mallory.

And on the following morning they set out in pursuit of the men who had swindled them.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. ISAAC SALOMANS "ON DECK."

And now we are back in Paddy's Flat; and just in time for fun, to judge from appearances.

In and out of the Terpsichorean Hall, kept by one Dinny McGee, swarms a restless multitude of thirsty mortals; and before that classic portal the same crowd interweaves ceaselessly, keeping up a constant buzz of eager conversation.

Jim Gladden stands there with a crimson-corded baton and a silver shield, the insignia of his office.

Beside him stands his deputy, Harry Keene, excitement and pride but thinly disguised by an air of affected ease.

From time to time his eye alone has detected a scarcely perceptible flutter of the white curtain that screens the window above the door of old Abraham's store.

She is watching him! He knows it, and with what palpitating delight.

Jim has no occasion to complain of the behavior of his deputy, though he occasionally frowns as some one of his *posse* mutters a half intelligible excuse, and breaks from the ranks, always to dive into the saloon door.

Next to this select body of men stands a much larger one, its members distinguished by an attempt at a uniform, in that each man wears a red shirt of some kind. But they are of all shades and conditions. Long wear has turned most of them purple.

This is the fire department of Paddy's Flat, and on parade day no man is allowed to wear a red shirt who is not a member of the organization.

At the head of the company always march four men abreast, with gleaming axes on their shoulders. Next come four men bearing a long pole, with a large iron hook at the end, and a rope attached. They are followed by four more with a ladder. The rest carry fire buckets.

Just now the hook and ladder are "stacked" in most imposing style; and most of the buckets are standing on the ground, to mark the place their bearers should occupy.

It is generally understood that the absentees can be found when wanted at the bar of Dinny McGee's dance-hall.

But we have reserved the especial glory of the fire department for the last—a certain crimson silken banner, the workmanship of "the ladies," won by the boys in a wrestling, running and jumping match with the fire departments of a half dozen adjoining camps.

This banner was the champion prize of a yearly tournament. Paddy's Flat had borne it off the field for two successive years; and every man was sworn to die before he let it pass into other hands.

So far no tournament had passed off without a dozen bloody fights, and profane charges of foul-play without stint. There was a constant menace that out of the grudges there engendered would result mortal combats in *duellos*, if not a general war between rival camps. However, these sports were adapted to the people.

The prize banner was borne by the tallest man in the company, its silken cords proudly held on either side by Tom Murphy and Dick Johnson. Suddenly Jim Gladden waved his baton, and shouted:

"Fall in, men! fall in!"

Then there was a pell-mell struggle through the door of the saloon, a scurrying hither and yon, and the men got into place.

"Forward march!"

And the procession moved out of the camp along the mountain road.

Of course every male member of the camp, save those who were detained at their posts by business, straggled along beside the procession; and a cur that barked furiously at the sound of the fife and drum got a kick, and went off yelping.

A mile from the camp the men were brought to a halt.

After an hour's waiting, just when everybody had come to concur in the sentiment that it was "a long time between drinks," the ringing crack of a stage-driver's whip, coming from far up the mountain, electrified one and all.

Then there was a hasty reforming of ranks. The fire department separated, standing on either side of the road, with the crowd back of them.

All eyes were fixed on a point across a deep gulf, round which came the mountain road in the form of a horseshoe.

A dark object was seen to leap into view against the sky; then, with a furious rattle of wheels and an eddying cloud of dust following in its wake, the Overland stage-coach came down the "grade" on the wings of the wind!

Cheer after cheer startled crag and canyon. The men seemed to go wild. Such lusty yells never were heard save from the throats of just such men.

Finally, in a way that to an unaccustomed eye would have seemed to threaten the life of every one concerned, the coach was brought up in the midst of the howling crowd; and Jim Gladden stood shaking hands with a jolly old fellow, with a fiery red face which bespoke no end of whisky toddies, who waved his hat, smiling and bowing, from the door of the coach.

Harry Keene was almost overcome at the glowing terms in which he was presented to Judge Owney Maglochlin.

"We have two prisoners for you captured by his own hand," said Jim Gladden.

"Has he?" cried the judge, with a look of pleased surprise, as he shook the young deputy's hand in his oleaginous jaw. "Be me sowl, he's a foine labd! An' it's a bit of a hangman we'll be after makin' o' yez, wan o' these days!"

But, looking past the speaker, Harry had caught sight of the face of another occupant of the coach.

It was a dark face, yet not ill-looking. On the contrary, it was rather striking for its Hebrew comeliness.

But its owner looked at Harry with a smile that turned the blood back on the boy's heart.

"Who can he be?" asked the deputy, of himself. "Where have I seen him before? At any rate, his coming here bodes me no particular good. I begin to feel as if I was destined to have a bout with him, of some sort."

Mr. Isaac Saloman was at the same time thinking:

"Dot's de little rooster! Well, I'll clip his spurs for him before he's much older!"

CHAPTER X.

FACE TO FACE.

THERE were two other occupants of the coach.

"Gentlemen," said the judge, with a wave of his pudgy hand in their direction, "let me introduce the honorable members o' the bar—both bars!" he interpolated, with a wink—"Colonel Blood and Milton Midge, Esq."

"These gentlemen swap lies, fur to kape honest men in jail, an' get rogues off," he added.

It was plain that he never spoiled a joke to spare a friend.

One was a man of ponderous build, with, seemingly, the good nature of a Newfoundland dog.

The other was a little whippersnapper, who puffed out his breast with the important air which often goes with diminutive stature.

"I have the honor, sir, to present you with my card!"

And the little colonel drew a bit of pasteboard from his vest pocket between the first and middle fingers, and thrust it at Jim Gladden with a motion as if he were dropping a dueling pistol into line.

"Colonel Blood, at your service!" he said.

"It does me proud to welcome you to Paddy's Flat," said Gladden, with all due gravity.

"If you have any rascals to put through, I dedicate my modest abilities to the service of the State!" said the colonel.

"As prosecutin' attorney, the colonel's the devil!" was the judge's indorsement.

In contrast with the little colonel's self-importance, Mr. Midge, who was lolling like a lazy giant, contented himself with a familiar nod and a pleasant smile.

Harry Keene took a liking to this man at once.

"He'll see a poor devil through, if it is possible," he reflected.

He had an odd feeling that he himself might have to rely upon Mr. Midge.

Accompanying this feeling was a wave of strong dislike toward the dark stranger, who was now presented.

"Mister Isaac Salomans," said the judge. "I'm free to say I've seen many a worse fellow than the same. When he drinks wid yez, d'yemind, he don't fool wid his liquor, but puts it down wid a swing that 'ud do honor to Tipperary—be me sowl, it would."

The judge could give no higher praise than this.

"It ain't natural that the two should cotton together," reflected Harry, with a strange sinking at his heart. "That fellow is a knave; and he has been worming his way into the judge's favor for no good."

But Marshal Gladden was already reforming the broken ranks of his men.

The musicians and ax-bearers preceded, while the hook and ladder men marched on either side of the coach, and those carrying fire-buckets brought up the rear.

Thus was the judge in his first circuit ushered into Paddy's Flat, amid the wildest cheers.

Of course he was "dined and wined" at the Golden Gate Hotel, to which the Terpsichorean Hall was an adjunct; and equally of course he "went down the middle" with the belle of the ball, and chuckled her under the chin, and called her "a foine gerrul!"

But that was later in the evening.

Immediately after such a dinner as would have made the proverbial alderman loosen his waistband, he was taken out to look about the place, and especially to visit the "calaboose."

Paddy's Flat was as proud of its new jail, as if it had been a free-stone town-hall.

The fire department had dispersed, leaving the guests to be escorted by the marshal's posse.

Jim Gladden walked between Judge Owney Maglochlin and Colonel Blood; while his deputy escorted in the same manner Milton Midge, Esq., and Mr. Isaac Salomans; the posse fetching up the rear.

Never had Harry felt his importance more. He was to march by the house of his *inamorata* in this grand state.

Old Abraham stood in his doorway, smiling and rubbing his hands, proud of Harry's distinction.

Just as the procession passed him, while he was bowing and grinning at Harry in token of his appreciation, he suddenly started with a gasp, threw up his hands, and turning ghastly pale, reeled, so that he fell against the doorway.

At the same time Mr. Isaac Salomans, who was on the other side of Harry, leaned forward, and fixed his eyes on the old man with a smile of ruthless triumph.

"Rebecca! Rebecca!" gasped the old merchant.

And fumbling blindly, he staggered through the door into his store.

In his agony of fear, he fairly dragged her to the doorway, and pointed through it.

Mr. Isaac Salomans looked at the old lady with the same expression that he had given her husband.

She seemed turned to stone.

Then, in wild panic, Abram sprang forward, slammed the store door, and locked it.

Harry, with a face as white as his shirt—and he had donned a "b'iled" one in honor of the occasion—stared at Mr. Salomans.

That gentleman looked directly into his face, with a smile and a bow.

Now the boy saw in that mocking face what had haunted him.

"He is a relative of hers! Her—her—"

But the words died in his heart.

"Well?" queried Mr. Salomans.

Harry bit his lip, but walked on in silence.

"He ain't of the common sort," reflected Salomans. "He means mischief. He has it in him. I can see that. I'll have to watch him. And he's deputy marshal of this little mud-hole!"

They went on to the jail, where Judge Owney Maglochlin shook hands with the prisoners and slapped them on the back, saying:

"Faith, it's foine lads ye are! Ye'll hang aisy, me b'y!"

"It's mesilf that 'ud rather die of owdl age, av it's all the same til yer honor!" replied an Irishman, with a tug at his forelock and a scrape of his foot. "Sure, judge, dear, ye'll slape aisiur wid the thoughts o' lavin' a poor devil like me time for repentence."

"Be aisy!" enjoined the judge. "Sleep, is it?"

Be me sowl, I'd b'lave I rest betther av I didn't sleep so soundly."

"Arrah, man dear! it's not the haird heart ye have."

But another prisoner—a cowboy who had recently undertaken to "paint the town red," with the not unusual result of getting a citizen "ready for the spring planting"—was not so chicken-hearted.

"Ef this hyar sweet burg hain't got the sand to furnish a new rope—which the same Eagle's Roost sent my pard up the flume with a dirty piece o' hemp that the devil wouldn't have in his back yard fur a clothesline—then all I ask is that ye carry me over the ridge, so's to plant me out o' sight of it!"

"Don't ye worry about that!" suggested the judge. "It's not hemp we're wantin'."

When the ceremony of inspecting the jail was over, and the judge had been escorted back to the Terpsichorean Hall, Harry took the first opportunity to escape from his duty as an officer of the camp.

He almost ran to old Abraham's.

It was with difficulty he gained admittance. He was cross-examined as to his identity through the door, and then inspected through a closely-curtained window, before he was allowed to enter.

Once inside, he saw that old Rebecca sat with her a'ron thrown over her head, rocking her body to and fro, and moaning in distress, while Miriam stood white and trembling, her eyes round with terror.

At sight of him she pressed her hands upon her bosom, with a gasping sigh; but her face was irradiated.

Her eyes told him that she felt safe, now that he was come.

But old Abraham threw his arms about the boy's neck, and fell upon his breast, weeping.

"Ve are lost! lost! lost! Ach, mine Gott in himmel! vat has come upon us now!"

CHAPTER XI. PLANNING FLIGHT.

"WHAT is the matter? Who is this man that you all seem to fear so?" asked our hero.

But old Abraham only tore at his beard, after the traditions of his people, abandoning himself to utter despair.

In vain did Harry assure him that he—not powerless as deputy marshal of the camp—would stand by his friends.

"Who is it, Miriam?" he asked, going up to her.

She shrank trembling from his approach—not in fear of *him*, but with maiden coyness. Her modest eyelids hid the tenderness that glowed in her eyes.

"Kind shentleman, I do not know," she replied. "It is a bitter enemy of my dear mamma and papa. Ah, sure, they could harm no one. Who—"

"Miriam! Miriam! dis is not for you!" cried old Abraham, so excited that he seemed angry. "Go to your room!"

Then seeing, by her look of amazement, that for the first time in his life he had spoken roughly to her, he threw his arms about her, and burst into tears and sobs.

"Ah! my child, my dear child!" he cried kissing her cold cheek, "have I effer gifien you anyting but love? Go, go, my dear; dis is not for you. I vill save you if I can. Go, go!"

She clung to him a moment, calling him endearing epithets, and assuring him that she did not doubt his love.

"But trust in de kint shentleman. He will save us!" she whispered.

As she said this, she tightened her clasp about the old man's neck, and kissed him on the ear into which she thus breathed the secret of her inmost heart.

Then, with her cheeks aflame, and not daring so much as a single glance at him whom she had really caressed by proxy, she ran up the staircase to her room.

"What is this mystery?" demanded the boy.

"Ah, my frient!" sighed old Abraham, "I vill let you into de secret of my life. He is her father!"

"Her father!—Miriam's father?"

"Not so loud!—not so loud! Would you betray me to her?" and in wild panic the old man fairly covered Harry's mouth with his hand.

"But I do not understand you. Her father; and she does not know it?"

"You judge me. You think I have wronged her."

"Wronged her!" cried Harry, flaming with indignation. "She calls you father. She gives you the love and duty of a daughter. How dare you perpetrate such a fraud upon her?"

"Yes, yes!" assented Abraham, humbly. "But," he added, with a mournful dignity that Harry could not but be impressed by, "I have given her a love she would never have known from her real parent. Besides, dere is de tie of blood between us. She is my granddaughter."

"Why have you represented the relation differerently to her?"

"To spare her pain. When she asked for her father, could I tell her: He is a scoundrel; you shall not think of him?"

"What has he done?"

"Done?" cried the old man, drawing himself up with clinched hands and dilating nostrils. "What has he left undone? You see me in hid-ing from him—here in a strange land, far from my kindred, away from every frient. Do you think dot I come here for monish? Ah, yes! they say a Jew would sell his soul for gold!"

Never had Harry heard anything so bitter as the tone in which the old Hebrew repeated this Christian slander against his race.

"There are good Christians and bad Christians; but all Jews must be cheats and misers!"

"But I do not feel so!" protested Harry, his thought going out to Miriam in generous indignation.

For the moment he believed that he had never shared in this contemptuous opinion.

"What has he done?" resumed old Abraham. "He killed her mother."

"Killed her mother?"

"Mit a knife?—mit a pistol?—mit a bludgeon? Oh, no! He did not so much as strike her, I think. The law would find not'ing to condemn. But he broke her heart; he tortured her into the grave."

"Look! look!" cried the old man, his passionate recollection of the past bearing him out of himself, until he had something of the grandeur of manhood never otherwise manifested, save in his tenderness for his grandchild. "You have seen what a flower she is—how she lived but upon the sunshine of love. To her it is meat, drink, warmth, brightness, her very existence! Well, such as she, was her mother. He came. He possessed her. She withered, like a flower in the scorching sun. Dying, she gave her child into my arms, adjuring me to stand between it and the misery that had blighted her life."

By this time Harry was fully in sympathy with the passionate old man.

"He shall not touch her!" he said, through his set teeth.

"The law vill gif her to him!" said the old Jew, dejectedly.

"Law or no law, he shall not touch her!" reiterated our hero. "I will kill him first!"

He meant that. He was ready to fight to the death for her.

Old Abraham shook his head.

"Dot vill not do. You do not know. De law is not de vorst ve taf to fear."

"What then?"

"Miriam."

"Miriam?"

"Miriam!"

"But what have we to fear from her?"

"She vill go to him."

"That monster?"

"Her father."

"But the murderer of her mother!"

"Can you tell her dot?"

"Why not? Anything to save her. You should have been frank with her from the first. There could have been no need of deceiving her."

"You don't know her. She is an Israelite!"

As he spoke, old Abraham drew himself up with a look of haughty scorn that transfigured him.

It was plain that he was contrasting his own race with the race that had heaped so much contumely upon them.

"Honor thy father and thy mother!" he went on. "We teach our children dot. He vill say—Come! She vill go!"

"But this is monstrous!" cried Harry, his heart in his throat.

Was it possible that she might carry filial dutv even to the point of making it second to the love for him which he believed he had read in her eyes?

He thought of the day when she had kissed him. It had not been repeated since then. She seemed so sacred in her vestal innocence, that he had not dared to venture again on such a familiarity. Yet, whenever he chose, memory could revive the ecstasy of that moment, and he could feel again the velvety pressure of her warm lips upon his.

"There is but one way," said old Abraham.

"She must not know."

"But he will claim her. He will tell her all."

"He must not have the chance."

"How can we prevent it?"
"By flying with her at once."
"To-night?"

Harry's heart gave a great bound.

He was to be her protector! He was to save her from an unknown terror! She could not withhold her heart from him after that. Once away, he would not have the interposition of her father to fear; and he would work upon the fears of the old people, to overcome their prejudice against her marrying outside of her own race and religion, and to induce them to give him a legal right to protect her—a claim upon her which would come even before that of a father.

"It can be done!" he cried. "It shall be done! Get everything in readiness. I will look to everything outside—horses for flight, and hands that will defy him and all the lawyers he can muster!"

He wrung the old man's hand; he patted the old lady on the back, assuring her that she could tie to him, and he would see her through.

"Ah, you gif me new life!" she said, clinging to his hands, so brave and strong.

To his infinite embarrassment, she even bent and kissed his hands with gratitude, leaving a tear upon them.

His heart swelled. He loved this kindly old couple. How they depended upon him—Rebecca on one side, and old Abraham on the other.

But he wanted one thing more. Before setting out on his new enterprise, he longed to feel the clasp of the soft, warm hands of the girl he loved. He hungered to gaze into her eyes, glistening with admiration and gratitude—to hear her low voice tell her confidence in him.

"Call Miriam down. Let me see her a minute," he asked.

She came, like a timid fawn.

Harry trembled fully as much as she did, as she approached him.

Both of the old people poured his praises into her eager ears, until his ears tingled with embarrassment.

He reached forth and took both the hands that fluttered into his.

"Miriam," he said, "I am going to take you away. Are you afraid to go with me?"

"With you?" she breathed, her eyes distending with wonder.

The plan of their flight had flashed upon him all at once, while he was waiting for her to come down-stairs. He had not consulted Abraham; but he set out with it as boldly as if it were all arranged.

"Your father will have to stay behind to protect your mother. She is too old to ride as we shall have to—for several days, with scarcely any rest. You are young; and that makes a difference. When you are in safety, I will return and fetch your parents. Everything depends upon the swiftness and secrecy of our movements."

Old Abraham's jaw dropped. He had never dreamed of leaving the girl to this young Lochinvar. But, maturing his plan as he went along, Harry proved that this gave almost the only hope of success.

In the end he carried his point, without any opposition which the girl perceived.

And she? She blushed divinely, as, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, she told him that she feared nothing with him.

Had not her parents, in their gratitude, seconded her own heart?

But, as he let him out of the back door, old Abraham clung to his hand.

"I trust you with more than my life," he said, in a husky voice. "God will avenge the innocent, if—if—"

"That will do!" interrupted Harry, with the prompt indignation of a chivalrous nature. "She is as safe with me as with you. One of these days you will believe that, if you do not now."

"I do!—I do!" cried the old man. "God bless you, my son!—God bless you!"

And the boy went out into the night.

CHAPTER XII.

"DRAWING EYE-TEETH."

"HALLO, Hal! Jest my size! Step this way."

It was Jim Gladden's voice; and for the first time since he had known it, Harry's heart sunk at the sound of it.

"What's wanted?" he asked, going forward.

"A paper to serve. Got up in A No. 1 style, with all the flourishes an' red tape. Who says as Paddy's Flat ain't a-boomin'?"

Jim was aglow with pride.

As he flourished a document which Harry's eyes followed apprehensively, his exuberant

feelings sought a very characteristic Western vent.

Striking his sides repeatedly with his elbows, he gave utterance to as lusty a crow as ever issued from a barnyard.

"A paper?" repeated Harry, faintly. "What sort of a paper?"

"A writ of *habeas corpus!* The fu'st one issued by the court in Paddy's Flat! I had a sneakin' notion fur to serve it myself, bein's as it was the fu'st; but I 'low as it's the proper caper fur to make these hyar leetle p'ints by deputy. Then ag'in, bein's as how you had a bigger stake on this hyar turn than anybody else, I reckoned as it 'ud be the square thing to give you a show."

"I have an interest in it?"

Harry's voice trembled. He knew what was coming.

"Oh! you can't close *my* eyes!" cried Jim, gayly. "D'y'e think I don't see what's goin' on directly under my nose? *Waal*, I reckon!"

And making a facetious sound at the base of his tongue which cannot be represented by letters, but with which every one is familiar, he poked the boys in the ribs with his finger.

"What do you mean?" asked Harry.

"That you're goin' fur to have a dog-goned sight better-lookin' father-in-law than you 'lowed to!" declared Jim, with a wink.

"A father-in-law?" repeated our hero, fighting shy to no purpose.

"What d'y'e think that ole fraud has been up to?" asked Jim, with a sudden change to indignation.

Harry knew that, if he was to steal a march on Jim Gladden and all the others, he must not let it be seen that there was an understanding between him and old Abraham; so he persisted in his pretended ignorance.

"What fraud?"

"That blasted sheeny."

"Abraham?"

"Is that any other?"

"What has he done?"

"Rung in a cold deal on this hyar hull bloom-in' camp—the which we're a sweet lot not to drop to sich a racket as that. The galoot as wouldn't know as sich a spring chicken as that thar leetle sweetness couldn't have sich an ole mummy fur its dam, ought to put his head to soak fur a month o' Sundays!"

"Are you talking about Mr.—Abraham's daugh—"

"Abraham's nothin'! He's a double-distilled liar, all round! I'm talkin' about Mr. Isaac Salomon's daughter. He's a sheeny, too—begin' yer pardon!—but he's upper-crust. An' he's behavin' mighty white, considerin'. He might bring that ole humbug up with a round turn, fur abduction. But what he's after, he says, is the kid; an' he'll let the ole man off easy."

"Then this summons—"

"Commands Abraham Schlossmeyer to produce the infant—Haw! haw! haw! a sweet 'infant,' eh? Blast their hides!—these hyar lawyers is constitutionally opposed to takin' anythin' straight but their whisky! To produce the infant, Miriam Salomans in open court, an' show cause why he should detain her from her natural guardian, as aforesaid!"

"But not to-night!" cried Harry, seeing all his plans ruined by this promptness of his adversary. "It is threatening a storm. You would not drag a young girl—"

"An' sich a sweet one, at that, out in the wet, fur to melt? *Waal*, I reckon of you yank the ole man up before the judge, he'll let him go securitely fur to chip in when his turn comes in the mornin'."

"Common decency would demand that," said our hero, with warmth, ignoring the fact that he himself was meditating the thing he condemned. "I reckon the boys of this camp will stand off any man—"

"Why, consarn yer pictur'!" cried Jim, in surprise at the tone the boy had assumed, "I reckon you don't drop to this thing. It's her dad, jest a-rollin' in rocks. He'll give her an outfit that old fraud never would 'a' dreamed of."

"Oh, yes," said Harry, seeing his mistake. "Well, give me the paper."

"An' ye want to do it up in style. Take the hull posse along. Spread the thing out over as much ground as it'll cover."

Together they went to Terpsichorean Hall, where it was plain that Mr. Isaac Salomans had been "making himself solid with the boys."

They were drinking the whisky he paid for, with no lack of relish.

He was "solid" with the judge, too. You would have thought them old cronies.

"He's playing to win," said Harry to him-

self. "He'll have all the boys in sympathy with him, as a wronged father, and down on old Abraham, as the villain in the play. And he will adopt the same course with Miriam. He'll persuade her that both he and she have been wronged. She will go with him; and then good-by to me!"

"This is the officer who serves dot paper," said Mr. Salomans, with a smile that might be interpreted as cordial or sarcastic. "You must join us in a social glass, sir."

"Excuse me," said our hero. "I never drink."

He spoke almost curtly. He knew that there was no use dissembling his true feelings.

Judge Owney Maglochlin bridged over what might have been an awkward pause, in a country where that sort of speech is very apt to call for an explanation.

"Not durink!" he cried, staring at the boy as if he were a natural curiosity. "Faith, you're remiss in yer duty to humanity. Think o' the dhrunkenness ye'll be held to answer fur! All me loife I've been throying to get as much o' the vile stuff out o' the worruld as possible, so's not to lave it as a sthumbling-block to them as can't resist temptation. 'Pon me sowl, I b'lave I've swallowed enough, wan toime and another, to float a man-o'-war!"

Harry laughed.

"You're very earnest in the temperance cause," he said.

"Be me sowl, it's kilt entirely that I am fur the binifit o' humanity in general. But here goes fur martyrdom ag'in! We'll have our reward in the nixt world, b'y's!"

But the boys drank with one eye directed toward where the deputy marshal was forming his men.

They marched in a squad, with our hero abreast of the first two.

Everybody in the dance-hall followed them out, leaving the judge alone with his toddy.

Straight to old Abraham's store they went; and the young deputy rapped on the door with the butt of his revolver.

Abraham obeyed the summons promptly.

"I am here, shentlemens," he said, with dignity. "Vat you vant mit me?"

"It is my duty to serve this summons upon you," said Harry, handing him the document. "You will accompany us, and make your appearance before Judge Maglochlin."

"I am ready. Do mit me vat you vill."

The old man closed the door behind him, and took his place beside Harry.

So they made their way to Terpsichorean Hall, where the judge awaited them in anything but judicial solemnity.

"Well, me foine fellow!" was his salute, as old Abraham stood before him, bowed like a veritable Shylock. "Faith, it's a gay laddybuck ye air, fur to have the gerrul they tell me ye're harbordin' as yer own child. Where is she, man? Let us have a look at her, annyways."

"Your Honor would not drag a young girl out of her home at night," suggested Harry. "Will it not be enough if she puts in her appearance at the trial?"

"Thayre's somethin' in that," admitted the judge.

He looked at the young deputy with a merry twinkle in his eyes, as if he saw how the wind lay, and added:

"It's tider of her ye air, fur a stony-hearted minion o' the law! Be me sowl, I'm wid yez in that same. What won't we do fur the ladies?"

"We shall want security that she will be produced in the morning," said Mr. Isaac Salomans.

He was standing at the judge's elbow. He looked at old Abraham with a smoldering fire of hatred under his never-varying smile.

The old Hebrew lifted his eyes to the face of his son-in-law, and gazed at him with cold disdain, making no reply.

"Be 'azy!" said the judge, with a touch of asperity.

He didn't like being jogged as to his duty.

"Who'll go on yer bond, owd man, av we let yez off till the morning?"

"I have monish," said Abraham, proudly.

"I will secure you with all that I have."

"Faith! we'll howld yez by the purse-strings! No fear o' yer roaming far under them circumstances!" laughed the judge.

"How much vill secure you?"

"I'll be 'azy on yez, so I will. Make it five hundred."

Old Abraham shivered. He was going to forfeit the money, as he would have done a hundred times as much, if necessary. But he could not do it without suffering internal torture.

"I vill go back to my home, and bring you de monish," he said, huskily.

And, accompanied by Harry and his men, he did so.

As he laid it on the table before the judge, it seemed fairly to stick to his fingers.

Then, wringing his hands, he tottered from the room.

But when he held in his arms the girl for whom he was making so painful a sacrifice, her love repaid him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARTING.

"THAT anti-pork 'atin' dude?" cried Tom Murphy, when Harry laid his scheme before him and Dick.

"Be the sowl o' me fut, av we couldn't git the shtairt o' yan spalpeen, it 'ud be toime we'd disband."

"Jist you don't worry," was Dick's assurance. "We'll fix him. You git de gal ready; an' we'll be up de road wid de hosses."

"We must act all alone," said Harry. "That slippery fellow has so won on the boys, that I should be afraid to approach one of them."

"We don't want none o' dem!" said Dick.

"Faith, phwat fur would we have the loikes o' them shtanding about in the way?" demanded Tom.

"It is all arranged, then," said Harry. "You are sure about the horses?"

"Dah's de bronchos what we-uns own. Dey's good fur legs wid anyfin' in dis hyar camp."

"It's wan more we're wantin' fur the gurrul. Faith, we'll take Jim Gladden's, Tavin' him worrud that it's only borried."

"That will give us the very best horse in the camp," observed Harry.

"An' av he catches us," suggested Tom, as if this were a consideration worth entertaining, "we won't hang fur horse-st'alin'!"

"No fear but Jim would take it all in good part," admitted Harry. "If we could make him believe as we do about this villain, he would be with us."

"Take no risks," said Tom. "Av yez have anything to do, do it yerselves."

"Well, then, set about your part at once."

The boys separated, Harry going directly to old Abraham's.

He found a miserable household; and when he had almost dragged Miriam from the clinging arms of the old people, she was nearly fainting with excess of emotion.

He supported her sobbing in his arms, as if she were his sister. In that supreme moment neither thought of disguising their mutual affection; and in the chivalrous tenderness of our hero the old people saw nothing to reprehend.

"Put out the light," said Harry. "No one must see us leave the house."

As Abraham blew out the candle, Rebecca uttered a great cry of heart anguish, and clutched convulsively at the girl who had replaced in her heart her own child of long ago.

"Ah, Gott! Gott!" she cried. "We are losing you! I did not know it was like dis. Miriam! Miriam!"

"Mamma! mamma!" cried the girl, clasping the old woman in the darkness.

"I shall die!" sobbed Rebecca. "Abraham, can we not keep her with us, and appeal to his generosity?"

"The generosity of the wolf!" returned Abraham, fiercely. "Has he not killed vone alreaty?"

Miriam shivered. She had before heard such allusions as this, not understanding them. She had never asked an explanation.

But even old Abraham, when it came to the point of actually committing his cherished child to another, clung to her, rocking to and fro with her, as a mother might grieve over her dead baby.

As soon as he could bring himself to break in upon their pain, Harry interposed:

"Think of Miriam. She will need all of her strength."

"You are right," admitted the old man. "Take her! take her, my son!"

And he put the sobbing girl into the deputy's arms.

She was almost at the point of swooning.

"Go into the store and leave her with me a moment," ordered Harry. "She cannot go out until she is more calm."

The old people obeyed him. Old Abraham led his wife with a tenderness that their mutual grief augmented.

"We shall not know the actual moment of her going from us," he said.

Then, in the darkness, clinging to each other, they waited.

Harry sat down on a settle next the wall, and drew the weeping girl down beside him, pillow-ing her head on his breast.

He knew that words were useless. The firm clasp of his strong arms, in silence, would impart a sense of dependence and security. The girl's thoughts would turn to him; and so, gradually, she would become calm and hopeful.

Youth ever looks forward to the brighter morrow.

When she was calmed somewhat, he asked:

"Miriam, you do not fear to trust yourself so entirely to my guidance?"

"Ah, no!" she sighed.

The ecstasy of love was already softening the pain of separation from those other claimants who henceforth were to stand second in her affection.

Such is the course of nature. Not that she loved them less, but that she loved him more.

"You are ready?"

"Yes, kint shentleman."

"Come, then."

He rose and slung across his shoulder the saddle-bags which contained the slender stock of necessary clothing which she was to take with her.

Then, while she clung to his arm, he led her out of her home into the darkness of the boundless outer world.

Hugging close to him, she stepped as lightly as a fairy. But she shivered with dread as she felt the chill night air.

Before the door closed between her and those she loved, she threw two silent kisses in their direction, whispering:

"Good-by, my dear papa! Good-by, my dear mamma! Gott keep you both—and your poor Miriam!"

Then she was a fugitive, indeed, with nowhere to call her home.

With infinite caution Harry piloted the timid girl, shrinking and quivering at every sound, at every fancied shadow, out of the camp, until he gained the rendezvous.

"All right, boys?" he whispered, with a thrill of elation.

"Dah hain't been a sound," was Dick's assurance.

"Then let's get out of this instanter!"

"You an' Miss Miriam takes de best hosses. Hyeah's Jim Gladden's. Ef we has to run fur it, it's more portant dat you two gits away dan me 'n Tom."

"Did you get Miriam's side-saddle?" asked Harry, with sudden anxiety. "I forgot to mention that."

"We didn't furgit it," assured Dick, taking pride to himself.

"But how did you get it out of the stable, almost under the noses of the boys going in and out of the Terpsichorean Hall?"

"Dis chile hain't been chick'n-huntin' all dese years fur nuffin'!" chuckled Dick. "Jist you tank de Lo'd fur de saddle, an' ax no questions!"

"I'll remember you, Dick," said our hero, gratefully.

Lifting the girl in his arms, he set her in place in her saddle.

"You are not afraid?" he asked.

"Oh, no."

"The horse is so much larger than you are used to."

"I can manage him."

His arm yet lingered about her waist.

She had not withdrawn hers from his neck.

In the darkness of the chaparral no one could see them. Tom and Dick were busy mounting.

The girl's face bent close over that of her lover, to catch and respond to his whispers.

She thought of what he was risking for her sake. This was no trifling escapade. There might be blood spilled along the trail upon which they were setting out.

Suppose he were killed? All the malignity of the enemy she dreaded would be directed against him. She had not thought of that until now.

"Hahree," she whispered, with her lips close to his ear.

"Yes, darling!" he breathed, so low that none could catch the tender sound.

He trembled with eager ecstasy. She sighing softly.

"I had not thought until now," she said.

"This opportunity may never return to us."

"Well, well?"

Her face dropped lower, until, accepting this mute commission of herself to him, he kissed her lips again and again.

"Whatever happens," she said, brokenly, "you—will know that—from the first—"

"We have always loved each other?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Thank God!" he breathed. "I loved you even before I had seen your face. Do you remember when I held your hand in the darkness?"

"After you had saved me from those ruffians? Can I ever forget it? Never!"

"Ready?" called Tom, cautiously.

"Now and forever!" whispered Harry.

"Forever," breathed the girl in return.

Their lips met once more, and then she sat erect.

Harry swung into the saddle.

"Ready," he responded to Tom.

"Not quite!" said a voice in the darkness.

And a shadow rose in their path, as if out of the ground.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HONOR OF THE CAMP.

Miriam uttered a low cry of terror, and reined her horse toward her lover.

On either hand, where his pards were, Harry heard the ominous click of hastily-drawn revolvers.

His own weapon was in his hand as soon as theirs.

"Stand aside!" he cried, in a low, hoarse voice. "Out of our path, or I will shoot you down!"

"No you won't!" declared a well-known voice.

"Jim! Is that you?"

"It ain't anybody else."

"Don't interfere with us. I can't explain to you now; but will when I can do so safely. This is all right. I will satisfy you that it is in a few days. You know that you can trust me."

"I thought I could!" said Jim, with bitter significance.

"Have I ever failed you?"

"Never before."

"Well, then?"

"What did I say when I made you my deputy?"

"I don't know just what you mean."

"I said that I wanted men that wouldn't be the fu'st to break the law they were sworn to uphold."

"But this is different, Jim. Such a case might never happen again—"

"It won't happen once!—not while I'm alive!" interrupted Gladden, with an emphasis that made his deputy's heart quail.

For a moment he was at a loss for a reply, feeling how much depended upon what he said next.

Jim Gladden went on:

"This is the fu'st warrant that was ever served in this hyar camp. It's a goin' through, make or break—you kin bet yer life on that!"

"Jim," said Harry, huskily, will you listen to me while I explain?"

"You can't explain away one thing."

"And what is that?"

"The honor of this hyar camp! Thar's a mighty sight o' crooked business about the law. Them as has the makin' of it, an' them as has the carryin' of it out, is only men, an' some of 'em mighty slippery cusses, at that. Waal, I low one thing's signed an' sealed. The fu'st deal at Paddy's Flat, with Jim Gladden at the box, is goin' fur to be squar'!"

Harry was in a dilemma. He could not even state the facts in the hearing of the girl most deeply concerned.

Suddenly he leaped from his horse.

"Step this way, Jim," he said. "I'll tell you everything; and you shall judge."

He heard the girl be loved draw her breath tremulously. He thought he heard her breathe his name—that sweet "Hahree!" which fell from her lips as from none others.

Once on the ground, he became conscious of the vicinity of others, and surmised that they were surrounded by the whole posse, with Jim at their head.

And this was the fact.

Tom and Dick had not been so sharp as they flattered themselves.

Knowing—or at least suspecting—the relations which existed between his deputy and the beautiful Jewess, Jim Gladden had surmised that the coming of a father upon the scene just at this juncture might not be very welcome to the lover.

"He's got somethin' brewin'—that's flat!" said Jim to himself, reflecting upon Harry's manner since he had received the summons.

With this start, it did not take the marshall long to arrive at the probability of collusion between old Abraham and the boy who had served him so faithfully in the past.

"That ole coon's a-layin' low. That's what the matter with him!" he declared. "The jedg 'lows to hev him by the purse-strings; but, ef I, any on readin' signs, the ole bloke set a hev by the leetle gal. S'pose he'd conclude to blo in the gilders, an' skip?"

After that, the prudent course for the mi

who was ready to go his pile on the honor of the camp was plain.

"I'll lay fur my gay an' festive lovver!"

And this he did, with the result of discovering his interview with Tom and Dick.

"His pards! Them's the ones to spot. While he's a-doin' of the inside work, they'll be a-doin' of the outside. I'm after ye, my sly dodgers!"

That he made good his word, we have seen.

He saw the boys take not only their own horses, but his. He did not interfere with them, willing to wait until he had the whole plot.

The getting of the side-saddle placed their purpose beyond a peradventure.

And now, in such agitation that he could scarcely speak coherently, Harry put the whole matter before him.

Jim Gladden listened patiently to the end, and then said:

"I reckon, boy, as you allow I hain't nothin' ag'in' you?"

"I know that, Jim."

"I don't bear ye no grudge fur what ye was up to as fur as takin' my hoss is consarned—the which thar ain't his match in these hyar parts. Ye'd be welcome to him an' a good deal more, ef so be it would do ye any good, an' that was all thar was in it."

"I believe that, Jim. I wouldn't have consented to taking the horse if I hadn't."

"So fur, so good! We hain't no quarrel up to date. Now, then, what you've been a-tellin' me may be all straight. I'm free to say as I don't believe it."

"But, Jim!" cried our hero, in trepidation.

"Oh, you're all right. You believe it," said Gladden. "But the ole man in my opinion, has been usin' you to mop up a dirty job. This hyar gent has give me all the ins and outs o' the case; an' I allow he's willin' to do the thing up purty white. The ole man don't like his son-in-law. Like as not he made half the trouble between man an' wife. When you know more about these hyar famly rumpuses, you'll 'low that's mighty easy to do. The mother dies, an' the old folks runs off with the child. They brung her up on a lie. What for?"

Harry hurriedly repeated old Abraham's explanation.

"That's a dead give away!" declared Jim, at once. "They 'low that the girl wouldn't stay with them if she knew she had a father. He can't be sich a scare-crow as they make out; or they wouldn't be so afraid o' leavin' it to her to choose."

"Then," he concluded, "after all's said an' done, that's the honor o' this hyar camp."

Harry was in despair.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. SALOMANS MAKES A POINT.

"WILL nothing move you?" cried Harry.

"I reckon not, chicken," answered Jim, kindly. "You take the girl back home. You give me your word that you'll drop this thing right hyar. I'll see that the ole man don't do nothin' without your help. An' we won't let on as this hyar has happened."

"But suppose I refuse?" cried Harry, passionately.

"I should hate to do it like p'ison. The Lord above knows as I would that! Ye see, I've taken a notion to ye; an' that's a fact. But, ef so be it comes between the honor o' this hyar camp—the which I'm free to say I'm p'ison sorry I ever had anythin' to do with the office o' marshal o' the same—between the honor o' this hyar camp an' that thar—that thar *notion*, I 'low I'll hev to clap you and yer pards—ye're a p'ison set when ye git goin'; I know that—to clap you an' yer pards in the calaboose, all fur to keep ye out o' mischief, tell this hyar case is tried."

Through all the despair of the moment, Harry felt the love of this rough fellow, and the reluctance with which he opposed his scheme.

He had planned to fight his way through any opposition; and he was not daunted now by the numbers against him. But it was impossible to enter into deadly combat with this man who had let him see into his heart with almost childlike simplicity.

"Jim," he said, at last, "I can't tell you how I feel about this. But you *will* believe that I bear you no malice?"

"I'm glad to hear that—I am so!"

"Well, then, let us compromise the matter in this way. Let us call all the boys of the camp together secretly—without the knowledge of these outsiders, I mean—and lay the case before them. I will abide by the general vote. If the boys say that the girl goes, and that you are exonerated, you withdraw your opposition. If

they say that she stays, I will take her back home to await the trial."

But Jim shook his head.

"Not countin' the law," he said, "we hain't the right to do it that way. Give the girl a show. She'd orter know who her father is. Ef she wants to go with him, she'd orter hev the chance. If she 'lows to stay with the old folks, I'll give ye my word to this hyar:—tha hain't law enough in this hyar section o' country to git her out o' Paddy's Flat, as long as that's a live man in it!"

This was Jim Gladden's ultimatum. His voice and manner showed it.

Harry had sense enough to know a finality when he came to it.

Besides, Jim's argument—the very one Harry himself had used before he had been swept away in the tide of the old man's grief and indignation—now weighed with him again. *Was it fair to take the girl's fate so completely out of her hands?*

"So be it!" said our hero, with sudden resolve. "But this I swear:—I will protect her against everything save her own feelings!"

"We'll all do that, little pard," averred Jim, putting his hand affectionately on Harry's shoulder.

Sore at heart, and dreading the future, the boy went back to the girl in whose eyes he longed to stand a hero.

"What will she think of me?" he asked himself. "I have failed at the very outset!"

He went up to her, and took her hand, and put his arm about her, at a loss what to say.

She bent down over him, as before, so as to whisper to him.

"All is lost!" she said. "I do not blame you. I see—it is your friends. You cannot fight them, even if they were not so many. Let us go back. It is true, that the law should not be broken. He is a brave man and a good man; my papa has said it. Maybe the law will not be so cruel, after all. I do not fear."

"What a girl you are!" cried the young lover. With admiration of her courage, and with gratitude for her clear view of the dilemma in which he found himself. "But, Miriam, believe me, if you stand by those who love you most—whose love you have proved—you indeed have nothing to fear. All the boys in the camp will stand by you, and protect you from harm. I have Jim Gladden's pledge that you are to be allowed to choose your own fate, no matter what the law may say about it. You know it is impossible to enforce the law here against the will of the community."

"Then why should we fly?" cried the girl. "I need not leave my dear papa and mamma! And—and—you need not be in danger on my account!"

What could be more delightful than such a confession, in accents all vibrant with tender solicitude?

The boy deputy lifted his sweetheart from the saddle, and stood her on her feet.

At that moment an ominous voice broke on their ears.

"You are a brave man and an honest vone!"

Although Miriam had never heard the voice before, she recognized the Hebrew accent, and knew that her enemy stood within a few feet of her, addressing Jim Gladden.

With a startled cry she shrunk closer to her lover's side.

Harry encircled her trembling figure with his arm, and instinctively threw his other hand round to the butt of his revolver.

Jim Gladden's voice next came to them, cold and stern. It was plain that he had taken a dislike to the man who had caused the defection of his deputy, and was impatient at his intrusion upon the scene where he could gain a knowledge of it.

"You hyar?" he said.

"With an eye to my own interests," replied Mr. Salomans, with his wonted coolness.

"You have tracked me, to see that I did my duty?" was Jim's next demand.

"No. I was on de heels of dis young gallant. I took his measure, and made up my mind dot it was in him to play me a trick. Since a trick dot was played on me some years ago, I have made it a point to count my own game. However, it has given me an opportunity to hear what you have said; and once more I say—you are an honest man."

"I wish I could return the compliment!" said Jim Gladden, so bluntly that it was plain that, the longer he talked to this man, the more disposed he was to pick a quarrel with him.

But Isaac Salomans's temper was proof.

"It is not necessary," he said, coolly.

Then he walked over to where Miriam stood

clinging to her lover, and said, in a low, winning tone:

"My little girl, dey have taught you to hate and fear me. It is natural dot you should believe all dey say. I ask you to wait until tomorrow, when you shall hear my side of de story. For as many years, almost, as you have of life, I have wandered over de face of de earth in search of you, to tell you dis story. Ah! those have been years of pain, when I despaired of ever finding you! But I have found you now; and all I ask is dot you listen to me. If den you still believe them; if den you have no pity on me, I vill go away and leave you in peace. I do not come as an enemy to you, or to those who have wronged me. I do not use the law to force you against your wishes, nor to punish them, but only to compel those who have kept us apart to give you a chance to hear me. Dey may try to poison your heart against me to-night; but I beg of you—wait! wait!"

His voice broke. Those who heard him believed that there were tears in his eyes, hidden by the darkness.

In spite of himself, honest Jim Gladden went back to his former opinion.

"I'll sw'ar he ain't so bad!" he decided to himself.

Even Harry was moved.

"He will convince her!" he said to his heart; "and I shall lose her!"

Miriam had hidden her face in her lover's breast, clinging to him all aquiver. For the time, neither words nor manner had any perceptible effect upon her. In her fear and prejudice, she did not listen. But later she was to recall both.

The wily Mr. Isaac Salomans turned abruptly away and left the spot.

"Come!" said Harry, and he led the shrinking girl back to her home.

"Dis is a great go!" said Dick to his comrade in disappointment.

"We'd better cut out o' this," suggested Tom. "Maybe Jim Gladden won't let us off so 'asy as he did Harry."

But Jim said nothing at all to them. He simply removed Miriam's side-saddle from his horse, and placed it on the back of Harry's broncho. Then he and his men went almost as silently as they had come.

"What's de reason we can't cut de dirt out from under 'em yit?" whispered Dick, excitedly.

"All we got to do is to run after Harry, an' tell him de coast is cl'ar."

"You're a fool!" said Tom. "Didn't he give his word to Jim Gladden?"

"What o' dat? I reckon no sich 'tickler p'ints wouldn't hold dis coon!"

"Well, Harry's a coon of another color," said Tom, dryly.

Without further discussion, they betook themselves back to the camp.

Meanwhile, the fugitives gained readmittance to the home of the old Jew.

Abraham and Rebecca were in despair. Miriam threw her arms about both of them, and the three wept in a common embrace.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STUBBORN OLD MAN.

"My friends," interposed Harry, "pardon me for breaking in upon your grief, but we must lay our plans for to-morrow. Another thing—Miriam must not be made sick by this prolonged excitement. Let her go and lie down, while we plan what is best for her."

Old Abraham understood our hero's wish to get Miriam out of the way, so that they could talk freely.

"Go, my dear," he commanded, brokenly.

The girl obeyed at once, without a question.

Her very readiness pained Harry.

"That is the blind obedience she will give to her father when she knows him," he said to himself.

Abraham had the same thought.

"You see," he said, when the girl was gone. "Ah, we haft taught her too well dis loving obedience!"

"We must make the best of it," decided Harry. "Do not forget that the more she loves and trusts you, the less ready she will be to leave you."

The old man shook his head.

"It will be he dot has de right to command her," he said.

"What preparation can we make to break the force of his authority?" asked Harry.

"None!" replied the old man, in gloomy despair.

"One thing, at least, is plain. She must not learn the truth from him."

The old man started, and clasping his hands,

seemed to shrink from some impending danger.

"No! no!" he gasped, in terror.

"You must tell her," said Harry, firmly.

"Confess dot ve haf deceived her from de cradle?" cried the old man, with an anguish that startled his hearers. "Ve haf robbed her dead mother of the first lisp of love from her baby lips! Ach, Gott! I never tought of dot before!"

And throwing the skirt of his loose dressing-gown over his head, he bowed it on his arms, on the table, while Rebecca began to rock back and forth, moaning.

"It is retribution!" pursued old Abraham. "She will turn away from us. He will make her believe dot we haf wronged him. Ah! I know his tongue."

He rose suddenly to his feet.

"No! no!" he cried. "My lips can never tell her dot! Ve must fight—fight him to de death!"

He looked savage. His eyes blazed. His bent form straightened.

"Wait!" pleaded Harry, taking hold of his arm. "Listen to me. If you persist in this hopeless struggle, you will ruin everything. Think of your age, and that of your wife. He will easily prove that it is next to impossible that you should have so young a child. Every one will scout the idea, when one who resembles her so closely as he does opposes his claim to yours. And can you look her in the eye, and tell her that it is false?"

The old man saw in imagination the wondering interrogation in the great tender eyes of the child who had listened to the words that fell from his lips as if they were gospel truth; and with a great cry, he dropped into a chair so suddenly that his whole figure seemed to collapse.

Harry put his hand upon his shoulder.

"You must be a man," he said, "and face this thing bravely. Tell her all. She will see the love that has prompted you. She will believe that you acted for her good. On the other hand, if you wait for him to prove it in spite of you, she will believe that you have been actuated by prejudice against him, as Jim Gladden and everybody else does now."

"Never! never!" said the old man, doggedly.

Harry was in despair.

He sought to appeal to Rebecca; but the old woman could do nothing but moan.

A rap on the store door checked Harry in an outburst of rage against the obstinate old Hebrew.

Abraham sprung to his feet, and stood like a beast at bay.

"I will open de door," announced old Rebecca, with a firmness that contrasted strangely with her past helplessness. "If dey kill dis olt body, it will be little loss, safe to my olt man and—Miriam!"

Her voice broke as she referred to the girl.

"We will put out the light," decided Harry, "so as not to be a mark for any one out in the dark. Then you throw open the door and stand aside. I will guarantee to pile six dead men in the doorway before one living one passes it!"

They extinguished the light.

Then Rebecca opened the door.

A single figure of a man could be seen outlined in the doorway.

"Halt!" cried the boy deputy. "Who are you, and what do you want here at this hour?"

CHAPTER XVII.

A FRAUD OF THE FIRST WATER.

It was Mr. Midge who stood before old Abraham's door, and was challenged by the deputy marshal.

"Don't trouble yourself about me, Mr. Deputy."

"Is that you, Mr. Midge?" cried the boy on guard, pocketing his revolver at once and going forward.

"In the way of business, if you will permit me. This is a little informal, but I confess to an interest in your charming *protégée*; and I thought that you might find yourself in some perplexity, which a suggestion—"

"If you *would* be so good! There never was any one more welcome."

And with a swelling heart the boy grasped the hand of the legal shark who was so cunningly taking him in.

He introduced the attorney to Abraham, and soon they were seated in close counsel.

"I hope you will help me to make Abraham listen to reason," said Harry.

And he stated the issue between them.

What was his surprise to see the attorney shake his head.

"I think I must side with our esteemed friend against you," he declared.

"Ah!" cried old Abraham, rubbing his hands. "Dere is hope! You see some vay to balk him?"

"The law," remarked Mr. Midge, "is a beautiful contrivance. It has the graceful windings of a ram's horn. The trick is, to know how to manipulate it."

"What is your plan?" asked Harry.

"We will get a postponement of the case on the plea that the young lady is prostrated by excitement and unable to make her appearance in court."

"But this will not be true."

"A mere form," said Mr. Midge, with a wave of his hand. "A doctor's certificate of ill health! A good deal easier than an I O U!"

"It is Doc Sawyer!" cried Abraham. "He shall swim in whisky."

"But what good will this respite do us?" asked Harry. "In the end there is no escape. A day or two at most—"

"Will probably afford us ample opportunity for a second attempt, which will be more fortunate than that of to-night," said Mr. Midge, quietly.

"But I have pledged my word."

"Therefore you will have nothing to do with the matter."

"Who then—"

"I understand that you were assisted by a couple of enterprising lads who have not pledged their words, and who will probably not be so scrupulous if they have. Then there are men in this camp who would jump at the chance to defeat the law, on general principles."

"I will give them a better reason for aiding us," cried Abraham.

Once started, he seemed to have thrown to the winds all mercenary considerations.

Our hero was seized with a great, trembling eagerness. He knew that it was an evasion of the spirit of his pledge; but if this could be done without directly compromising his honor, he would not obstruct it.

Abraham was driven almost wild.

"You are our savior!" he cried. "Monish will not compensate you. Three hearts will never forget you in their prayers."

"And she shall thank you. You will not regret serving one so sweet, so helpless."

And running to the foot of the stairs, he called:

"Miriam! Miriam!"

She came down, pale and terrified, fixing her great eyes questioningly upon the stranger.

What was the issue of this long conference? What had this unknown person to do with it?

But Mr. Midge smiled upon her with the fatherly patronage of a village parson.

"Come, come, my little lady!" he said, "you mustn't look so frightened. You have friends who will see you through—never fear."

Abraham caught her by the hand, and dragged her forward, pouring into her ears the praises of their new-found deliverer.

She stood at the knee of the good-natured attorney, and allowed him to chuck her under the chin and pat her on the shoulder, telling her that she was well worth fighting over, and praising the pluck she had shown in the attempt to elude her enemy.

She was too shy to thank him in words; but Abraham and Rebecca made up her deficiency in this respect, until Mr. Midge was fain, as if overcome, to say:

"Really, my good people, you are making too much of the mere ordinary performance of my duty."

Abraham pressed money upon him, of which he took only his usual retaining fee, saying that they would see about the rest as the case progressed.

He then took his departure, followed by a shower of blessings.

Having outlined the interview to his fellow-attorney, he added:

"My dear colonel, you should sometimes take these good deeds upon you, and receive their reward. Those good people will pass a more comfortable night than if the hope were not held out to them. It will be the better for their health, and will not prejudice their case any."

At that moment our hero was pacing the night, thinking with a swelling heart of this man who had come to their rescue; and Miriam, in the sanctity of her virgin chamber, was linking his name with that of her lover, in her communion with heaven!

CHAPTER XVIII.

COLONEL BLOOD "COUNTERS."

PADDY'S FLAT was a human bee-hive. For miles around men had poured in from less favored camps to see a "ginooine A No. 1 court."

The Terpsichorean Hall was turned into a "Temple of Justice;" and the boys looked with profound respect on the half-dozen law books

which stood in a row on the table behind which Judge Owney Maglochlin sat in anything but judicial state. His manner was rather in keeping with the whisky and cigars that flanked the Statute Book.

What set everybody on the *qui vive*, was the fact that no one had ever seen the girl's face, save only the Three Jolly Pards; and they had steadily refused to "give it away."

Now, however, she would have to stand unavailed in the open court.

But what is the meaning of this—old Abraham with his head hanging dejectedly on his breast, and a stooping figure, black-robed and veiled, escorted into the court on the arm of Mr. Midge.

"Rebecca!" cried one of the crowd. "You be blowed! It's the gal herself; an' my money says so!"

"An ounce of dust either way!" shouted an eager individual, shaking a buckskin bag above his head. "Put up, or shut up! What's the word?"

"It's a dead blind!" cried a third, radiant with delight at this prospect of a bet in which the shrewdest could get no "pointer."

And in five minutes' time there was scarcely an ounce of dust in the camp which was not "up" on the issue as to whether the budding beauty of the girl or the shriveled ugliness of the old woman would be revealed by the lifting of the vail.

Mr. Isaac Salomans sat beside his counsel, Colonel Blood, wearing the sad countenance of a man who, having been deeply wronged, yet bore no malice against his enemies.

No sooner had the court been called to order, with the customary "Hear ye! hear ye! hear ye!" This court," etc., than Colonel Blood was on his feet, addressing "His Honor" in most bombastic and highfalutin phrase.

However, before he fairly got under way, he was unceremoniously cut short by Milton Midge, Esq.

"If the learned counsel for the prosecution will yield to me a moment," he said, "I am about to move the court for a postponement of this case."

"A postponement!" cried the colonel, lancing his opponent with a glance of fiery scorn. "If it please the court, I insist upon an immediate hearing of the case. The parties to it are all present; and any proposal to delay can be but for the purpose of gaining time—for what, I will not say. But I repeat it, sir—it is but a pretext to gain time!"

That seemed to nettle the imperturbable Mr. Midge.

"I repel the insinuation with scorn!" he cried. "I hold in my hand, if it please the court, the certificate of an eminent practitioner of this locality—the family physician of my client—to the effect that the young lady about whom this suit is concerned is unable to appear in court, being prostrated by nervous excitement over the persecution to which she has been subjected by the person claiming to be her father."

The room rang with cheers by those whose bets were decided in their favor by this speech; and altercations rose on every side as to whether the money should be paid over at once, or not until the lifting of the vail had added indisputable confirmation.

"Yes! yes! I swear it by the beard of the Prophet!" shouted old Abraham, leaping to his feet.

"What we ask," pursued Mr. Midge, "is that the case be deferred to the end of the sitting, to give the young lady time to recover."

But the colonel overflowed with objections. Everything was irregular. He almost spat upon the certificate.

The words flew from his mouth "like hot shot from a hot shovel," as the boys put it; and when he finally gave over, rather because he was out of breath than for want of legal reasons why the motion should not be granted, everybody admitted that:

"He's hev up a purty middlin' pile o' dirt fur the other cuss to run through the long-tom, anyway. What'll ye go that it shows up ary color?"

Mr. Midge addressed himself to the task, with a flow of eloquence which called forth this characteristic comment:

"It jest shows how easy it is to lie! He sees the hop-o'-my-thumb, an' goes him fifty better!"

But, meanwhile, Colonel Blood had turned to honest Jim Gladden, who was watching the procedure with a frown which indicated his suspicion that all was not above-board.

"Look here, sir!" he demanded, in a fierce whisper, "are you a party to this plot?"

"Plot?" repeated Jim.

"You know very well that there is nothing the matter with the girl."

"I don't know anything of the kind."

"Come! come! I'm not prepared to split hairs with you over words. You have been heard to pledge your honor that the first case presented to the court in this camp should go squarely through on its merits."

"An' I'll stand by that, ef it takes a leg!" cried Jim, flushing to the roots of his hair.

"Then go and bring that girl into court. You are the responsible man. You can't screen yourself behind this tricky deputy of yours."

"Have I tried to do that?"

"I can tell better when I see how you act. But I can answer you one thing without delay."

"An' what's that?"

"If you really are the honest man you'd have it believed, and can't see through this little game, you're not fit for the office you hold."

"I'll show you what I'm fit for!" retorted Jim, with, it must be confessed, an oath.

"One word!" said the colonel, detaining him as he was about to leave the room.

"What d'ye want? Speak quick, and to the point!"

"Drive that quack out of the camp; and just give him a hint that if he shows his nose about here while the court is in session, he'll be judged for twelve months."

"I know how to take care o' him!"

"Be spry about it. I'll keep this thing in motion until you get back. But, remember that there's a limit even to legal obstruction."

"I wouldn't a' believed it!" muttered Jim, as he hastened from the room.

Harry Keene watched this in an agony of apprehension. A glance of angry reproach from Jim told him that he was suspected, and that the wily little lawyer had made a counter move.

He had not heard the whispered conversation; but any step on the part of the prosecution could have but one end.

And here he was tied to his post, unable to leave it without a breach of duty.

But could he endure this? Duty or no duty, could he leave her, a prey to unknown terrors, to cope alone with this new assault of her enemies?

"Never!" he muttered, between his set teeth.

"Whatever comes of it, my love stands first!"

And with a dogged resolve to stand by her even to the death, he abandoned the prisoners over whom he was on guard to the care of two constables who were with him, and slipped from the room.

Yet even as he did so, he could but sigh in his heart, in the bitterness of despair:

"Miriam, my poor Miriam, everything is against us! This scoundrel will surely win!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A MINIATURE REVOLT.

OUTSIDE the dance-house he came up to Jim Gladden at the head of the remaining four of his posse.

"Jim," he cried, "what are you going to do?"

"What! you?" cried Jim, flaming red with anger.

"Yes, I!" replied Harry, doggedly.

"What do you mean by bein' off your post?"

"Did you suppose that I could stay? I have come to stand between you and her."

"Go back!"

"Don't ask me to do that; for you know that I can't. She has got to come—that's plain enough; but I will go for her."

That he got so far was due to the fact that Jim Gladden was so moved by wrath that he could not find voice.

When he did speak, his voice was husky with suppressed fury.

"Am I your superior officer or not?" he demanded.

"I resign my position!" cried Harry.

Under different circumstances this would have cost him the severest struggle of his life; but now he thought only of Miriam and her fears.

"Free from your orders, I can at least accompany you to her house, and tell her that she has nothing to fear."

"But I refuse to accept!" cried Gladden.

"Go back to your post, I command you!"

And to show that he was not to be further trifled with, he drew his revolver and cocked it.

"Jim!" cried his deputy, in amazement, but betraying no outward sign of fear.

"Go back, I say; or I will shoot you in your tracks!" was the only reply he got.

And Jim Gladden, such was his resolve, dropped his weapon into line with the boy's heart.

But now came an unexpected interruption. "Hole on, dah, boss! We's lined you, bofe of us!"

"Be jabers, ye kin bet yer loife!"

And glancing over his shoulder, Jim Gladden saw Tom Murphy and Dick Johnson with drawn revolvers menacing him.

"We hain't got nuffin' ag'in' you, Jim," remarked Dick. "But when it comes to pop-guns, de Free Jolly Pards stan's an' falls togeder; an' dat's so!"

For a moment Jim Gladden was too much amazed at this open rebellion to make reply. He could only stare.

There could be no doubt that the boys were in dead earnest.

They had been among the most intent spectators in the court-room.

Already that morning had Milton Midge, Esq., interviewed them, and intimated what might be required of them in the event of the success of his scheme. This he had done, so that nothing should be lacking to make it appear that he was acting in good faith.

After preparations so complete, who could suspect that he was really in collusion with his fellow attorney, the two playing into each other's hands, so as to augment the fees which they could exact with an appearance of reason?

Watching every move, the boys were quick to detect Colonel Blood's use of Jim Gladden. Then, seeing their pard follow, they, too, slipped out of the court-room, to be on hand if they could be of service.

They were in time to show their spirit, and the loyalty which bound them to their comrade, in the face of dangers that might well have deterred grown men.

With a disposition to treat their demonstration as a lark carried to an indiscreet length, the four constables made an advance upon them, swearing at them not ill-naturedly.

"Bod scan till the loikes o' the spalpeens! Git out o' that, ye beggars!" cried an Irishman.

But the boys proved that they were quite serious.

"You take car' o' dem riff-ruff, an' I'll hole de boss!" was Dick's order.

"L'ave me alone fur the loike o' that!" replied Tom; and, whipping out a second weapon, he brought it to bear on the astonished posse.

"Kape yer distance, gints!" he commanded, "or I'll l'ade out a bower at yez!"

But here Harry's senses came back to him. He saw the folly of this unheard-of stand.

"What do you mean by such nonsense?" he demanded. "Get out o' that! You idiots, I'd put you under arrest myself, if I hadn't set you the example. Do you reckon that the Three Jolly Pards run this whole camp?"

"Hugh! Reckon we could make a right smart chance at it, ef you-uns didn't back down!" declared Dick, putting up his weapon with a bad-enough grace.

"I'm the b'y that was good fur two o' them, annways!" added Tom, noways abashed.

"Jim," said Harry, turning to his principal, "you'd better kick me off the force. I deserve it. I'm not only guilty of a breach of discipline myself, but I am the cause of an open defiance of the officers of the law."

"Obey the order you have received!" commanded Jim, coldly.

With a sigh the young deputy turned on his heel and walked back into the court-room.

"It's of no use!" he said. "I am tied hand and foot!"

Tom and Dick now began to feel rather uneasy as to the probable outcome to themselves.

"Dey'll jug us, at de least calcalation!" muttered the latter, with a feeling of resentment toward Harry, as if he had left them in the lurch after they had shown their readiness to stand by him, come what might.

Tom said nothing, but he looked dogged.

Jim Gladden, when he had seen his subordinate re-enter the dance-house, turned without so much as a glance at his pards, and strode off down the street.

The posse followed him. But one of them, looking back, shook his fist at the boys with a laugh, muttering:

"You young divils! you've got off 'aisy this time."

"What'll we do?" asked Dick.

"Go back into the court?" suggested Tom.

"No, we won't!" cried Dick, with a look of sudden resolve.

"What will we do, then?" asked Tom.

"We'll do just what Harry wanted to do," responded Dick. "We'll go along o' dese hyah, an' let Missy Miriam know dat de pards is a stan'in' by her yit!"

"Let them ketch us a-follyin' o' them!" cried Tom, prudentially.

"What kin dey do?" demanded Dick, pugnaciously.

"Kick the likes of us to Kingdom-come, fur wan thing, if they don't take it into their heads to shoot us fur nosin' around whare we've no business to!"

"Ef you's skeered, you'd better go home to yo' mammy!" said Dick.

And in fine scorn he marched off after the marshal and his posse.

"Afraid, is it?" shouted Tom. "Devil sw'ape the like o' me!"

And he "followed suit."

Jim Gladden did not go directly to old Abraham's house, but kept on down the street past it, to a saloon whence proceeded a sound of pounding and a curious series of yells, or rather yelps.

It was the only sound in the camp, save those that came from the court-room, where the whole population were assembled.

Here Jim found a listless barkeeper, leaning with his elbows on his deserted bar, with a lazy grin on his repulsive face, as of a man who was trying to make the most of mighty poor fun.

Before him, in the middle of the room, with a bottle in one hand and in the other a glass from which its contents kept slopping as he moved, a solitary patron was executing a sort of drunken Injun war-dance.

It was evident that this solitary reveler was enjoying himself to the full; and the very absurdity of his antics, and his perfect self-contentment, would have convulsed with laughter one who witnessed the performance for the first time.

Espying the marshal and his men, he cried out to them, without abating his capers:

"Hello, fellers! Jim, ole man, step right up hyar, an' jine in the light fantastic! Order yer own liquor, an' have it chalked down to your obedient. I'm in funds to-day, fur the first time in a dog's age!"

And this was Doc Sawyer.

"Look a-hyar!" called out Jim Gladden, roughly. "Stop that tomfoolery, an' listen to me, me."

"Wha's the row, ole man?—wha's the row?" asked the doctor, nothing disturbed. "Wet yer whistle before you begin. Take the hoarseness out o' yer voice."

"You heyear me!" cried Jim. "You cut this camp instanter. An' ef you come loafin' about while the court's a-settin' you'll see the inside o' the new calaboose—an' thar ain't no lie in that!"

Doc suddenly stopped, and stared.

Jim turned on his heel, and left the place without further words.

He was followed out by the doctor, "on tie keen jump."

"Hold on, Jim!" he pleaded. "What is in the wind, anyway?"

"It's that snide certificate o' yourn," rejoined Jim, fiercely.

"It didn't go through?" asked Doc, in seeming surprise.

"Thar'll somethin' go through you, ef you don't flit!"

"Give me five minutes' start, an' when I git back it'll be my treat!"

The doctor's horse stood before the saloon. With his last words yet on his lips, his foot was in the stirrup. The next instant the dust flew from his horse's flying hoofs.

Jim Gladden had turned his back upon the derelict "saw-bones," and was striding toward Abraham's store.

But this diversion had given the alert pards their opportunity.

"See!" cried Tom, as the posse passed Abraham's on their way to warn Doc Sawyer. "We'll cut in an' give the gerrul the tip."

"Dat's jist what we's up to!" assented Dick.

And they slipped to the back of the house.

"Missy Miriam! Missy Miriam!" cried Dick, thumping on the kitchen door.

Left alone, a prey to a thousand undefined fears, the girl had flitted about the empty house on tiptoe, like a frightened wraith, listening to every sound, until her very solitude had driven her to her room, to lie cowering on her couch with the blankets thrown over her head.

The knocking startled her, so that for a time the wild beating of her own heart drowned every other sound.

But presently she made out Dick's voice; and with a low cry of delight, she ran to a back window overlooking the roof of a lean-to, and peered out upon the waiting boys.

Seeing the curtain disturbed, both made motions to her; and in a moment she had cautious-

Iy lifted the window, to hear what they had to say.

Both spoke at once, to the effect that some one was coming after her, but that she need have no fears, as the Three Jolly Pards were sworn to stand by her through fire and water.

"Is it—is it—Meestar—Meestar Keene?" she stammered, blushing rosy red.

"Devil a wan of him!" replied Tom. "It's Jim Gladden—no less. But we can't stand chin-in' here all day. Mind yer eye!"

And with this parting injunction, the significance of which was not quite clear to the girl, her friends glided away.

What was she to make of it? Evidently they were apprehensive of being caught communicating with her. Then it could not be that Jim Gladden was coming in a friendly spirit.

Had he too turned against her? Her heart beat wildly.

A moment later she heard his summons at the front door.

It was the peremptory knock of an officer of the law, who would brook no denial.

Where were her parents? Where was her lover? Must she meet this terrible marshal alone?

With her knees sinking under her, she went down and opened to him.

CHAPTER XX.

SALOMANS "DOWN."

DEPRIVED of the disguise in which she was wont to appear, Miriam had instinctively thrown a heavy veil over her head.

The members of the marshal's posse stared at her shrinking figure with undisguised admiration.

But Jim Gladden's heart was touched.

"Ye hain't no call fur to be afraid o' me, nor of any o' the boys," he said, kindly. "We air yer solid friends, ye understand. I wish I could say the same o' some o' them as is nearest to ye, an' as is playin' a low-down game on ye, bein's as how it's accordin' to natur' that you'd tie to 'em, an' low as they'd use ye right."

"What would you with me, kint shentleman?" asked Miriam, in a quivering voice, plainly not comprehending his words.

"Waal, we're 'lowin' fur to take ye into court—"

"Court?" gasped the girl. "Ah! kint shentleman, believe me, I have wronged no one!"

"Ye ain't to consider as you're under arrest, ye understand. Jest furgit as I'm the marshal, an' reckon me only one o' the boys what is sworn fur to see you through, ag'in' friends or foes."

"You will protect me?"

"Now you've got it, hold on to it! That's jest what I'm 'lowin' fur to do. You come along o' me; an' the two-legged critter as da'st to put a finger on ye ag'in' your say-so, will 'low as how a cyclone has struck him."

He held out his hand. The girl put hers in his with a sudden confidence in his hearty assurances.

The posse fell into the rear, and so they set out for the court.

But at this moment a man came tearing out of the Terpsichorean Hall, waving a bit of paper frantically above his head, as he caught sight of the marshal and his squad.

"Hold on, Jim!" he shouted, as he approached breathlessly.

"What's the row now, Tomkins?" asked the marshal, as he recognized one of his own men, who had been left with Harry to guard the road-agents.

"The thing's off. The boss told me to stop you, make ur break, an' hyar's the dockyment fur it."

Jim glanced at the paper which was handed to him. It was a hurried line from Colonel Blood, to this effect:

"Let up on the girl. The court has granted the postponement. If you have the defendant out of the house when this reaches you, hurry her back, and don't give away our flank movement. We can't afford to make any false play in this game of wits."

Jim fairly snorted with disgust.

"And this is law!" he growled, crumpling the paper in his hands. "A game of wits between a couple of pettifogging attorneys! I thought we was goin' fur to put the camp on a square footin', but hang me ef Judge Lynch don't beat this. He don't go sneakin' around in an' out o' back doors, whatever else he may do."

But the attorney was running the thing. Jim "obeyed orders, if he broke owners."

"Miss," said the honest marshal, turning to Miriam, "I hope you won't lay this hyar up ag'in' yer humble servent. I've tried to do my duty like a square man, but these hyar chaps gits away with me *bad!*"

Miriam was only too glad to be returned to her home, without having to undergo the ordeal of being dragged into court.

As they saw her led back, Tom and Dick could not forego the temptation to swing their hats and cheer lustily.

"For unadulterated gall," observed one of the posse, "recommend me to the Three Jolly Pards!"

Of course the triumph of Mr. Midge was with the connivance of his brother attorney. In spite of his great show of opposition, which took in the boys, Colonel Blood was careful to make no point that would weigh with the court.

When the decision was rendered, Abraham got up and looked about him like one dazed.

Rebecca was weeping spasmodically.

"Come, come, my dear!" he said, with his hand on her shoulder. "Our darling is safe now."

She rose, and together the two tottered from the room, the boys cheering at their triumph.

"What is this?" hissed Salomans in the ear of his attorney. "It is an infamous imposture!"

"But it's all reg'lar," responded the colonel, placidly.

"But what are we to do?"

"Come ag'in!"

Salomans ground his teeth in impotent rage.

"I can't hang about here all summer!" he muttered to himself. "This thing will make a noise; and who knows but it will bring those accursed Irishmen down upon me any day?"

But it was useless to "kick" against the ordering of the court. The next case was already being called, and the business of "justice" flowed on as smoothly as if Isaac Salomans's fortunes were of no consequence whatever.

"That old scoundrel has three days in which to give me the slip!" reflected the luckless Isaac. "Well, we'll see who wins!"

He set his teeth, and walked out of the court with a determined look.

"Ta ta! Call an' see us later!" jeered one of the miners as he passed.

The boys "caught on" in an instant, and the baffled Israelite was pelted with a perfect hail of chaff.

It would not do to fall out with the crowd, so Salomans turned with a good-natured laugh.

"This is only the first hand, boys," he said. "Wait until we throw 'em around again. Meanwhile, I acknowledge the corn. All that can get up to the bar, come and crook your elbows with me for better luck next time."

All that could get to the bar! Who couldn't? They solved the problem by circling round the room like a herd of cattle at a round-up! In this maneuver not a few "crooked their elbows" more than once.

Isaac had a pretty bill to pay, but he had conquered the crowd once more.

After the adjournment of the court for the day, he saw his lawyer.

"It is only a scheme to gain time for another attempt to run the girl off," he declared.

"No doubt," admitted the colonel.

"What are we to do?"

"Watch them."

"It will take men to do that."

"My dear sir, if you had counseled with me before opening the case, I should have given you the same advice I give to every one on the eve of such a step."

"And that is?"

"Count the cost before you begin!"

"Hang the cost!"

"Ah! If that's your spirit—and I admire your pluck—you have but to put down your money, and you'll find men ready enough to pick it up."

"I'll do it."

"Go in, sir—and win!"

Meanwhile, the old people had plucked up strength and courage, as they issued from the stifling air of the court-room into the free mountain breezes outside. Nearing their home, their steps quickened almost into a run.

Miriam opened the door even before they placed a hand upon it, and with a stifled cry leaped into their arms.

"Back! back!" cautioned Abraham, fearful lest she be seen.

But the girl had fainted. The long and terrible suspense over, she drooped like a broken flower.

Her grandparents carried her into the house, and then, clasping her and each other, mingled their tears of relief.

"Ah! never, never, never leave me alone again!" she breathed, as soon as she could speak.

Then, while she clung to both of them with trembling hands, she told them of the ordeal through which she had passed in solitude.

Abraham was greatly disturbed by the discovery of their trick, but Mr. Midge, when he appeared, reassured him.

"Oh, that's nothing," he said, blandly. "That's all in the way of business, you know. I have no doubt there are tricks in your trade as well."

Abraham did not see the quiet joke contained in these words. He poured out his gratitude on the attorney, drew forth a money-bag of goodly proportions, and overrode Mr. Midge's mild protests as he pressed a very respectable fee upon him.

Harry felt bound in honor to have no part in the plot to spirit Miriam off, so, when the matter was opened, he took her into the store, leaving the others to arrange it all, in the living room.

At this point there came a cautious knock at the back door.

Abraham was alarmed, but reassured when he found that it was Tom and Dick.

"Av ye pl'aze, sor!" said Tom, taking off his cap, and bowing with a scrape of his foot, "it's the likes of us as allowed that the two of us wouldn't be in the way when it come to planning to run the colleen out o' this."

"In de vay!" cried Abraham, hustling the boys indoors. "You vill nefer be in de vay in dis house!"

In the store Harry heard the entrance of his pards with a sigh of regret.

"Miriam," he asked, "can you forgive me for leaving your safety to others?"

Seated beside her on a box of stogie boots, he held her hand in his. She had leaned her head against his shoulder with a trusting dependence that charmed him.

"Forgive you!" she breathed, lifting her eyes to his face so that they gleamed in the light that shone through the open door from the other room.

"You know that my word is pledged to Jim Gladden."

"Ah, yes!" she answered.

After a momentary pause, she went on:

"You were ready to sacrifice your life for me. You do not think I would ask you to give your honor too? No! no!"

Then she dropped her voice, until, even with her lips close to his ear, he could scarcely make out its tremulous accents, as she whispered:

"I would not lose you so, if you did not put your honor before even your life for me!"

He could not reply in words. But as he pressed her close to his heart, he swore within himself that while he lived no act of his should make him unworthy of such a counselor.

When he could command himself, he observed:

"I once heard it said that men are what women make them. If you don't make a noble man of me, Miriam, I must be of mighty poor stock!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE JOLLY PARDS' TRIUMPH.

Two days went by. On the last night that the court was to be in Paddy's Flat, the boys arranged to celebrate its first session by a grand "blow-out."

Who was the prime mover in this scheme? The outward suggestion came from Dinny McGee. The idea originated in a close council consisting of the Honorable Mr. Midge and the equally honorable Colonel Blood.

"Everything is in readiness?" whispered the colonel, at the last moment.

"Your obedient servant has had the management of the case," replied Mr. Midge, as if that was assurance enough.

"The parties are worth milking," added the colonel, anxiously. "If we stave off the case now, it is bound to come up again, and that means a double fee."

"Meanwhile," pursued Mr. Midge, disposing of the matter in his summary way, "I have made a discovery."

"A counterplot? Has the scoundrel tried to steal a march on me, his counsel?"

The colonel spoke indignantly, as if this would be very shabby treatment.

"Cale Burchard and Bowlegged Banty are in the camp," said Mr. Midge, quietly.

Colonel Blood fairly leaped from his seat.

"No!" he almost shouted.

Mr. Midge smoked on calmly.

"The scamps who made the first assault on the defendant," continued the colonel.

"If that were all," answered Mr. Midge, "I should say nothing about it."

"Have they any other interest for us?"

"They are in league with your client."

"What?"

But ejaculations were lost on the unruffled Midge. He never answered them.

In reply to a direct question, however, he explained the relations of the precious trio.

"But they will be detected, lynched! Our man will be in the same boat with them. Then good-by to our fees!" cried the colonel, in an agony of apprehension.

"Don't you suppose they would take ordinary precautions? They are in disguise."

"Which you penetrated! But, look here! How is it that you come to know all about these fellows? You have never so much as seen them."

"On the contrary, I saw them last night. It seemed to me worth while to watch Salomans. His partners in crime were calling him to account for the miscarriage of his case."

"The scoundrels will balk us by watching the girl!"

"At the proper moment, Messrs. Cale and Banty will be disposed of."

"Eh? Have you let our boys into the thing?" "With the certainty that they would at once jump upon the rascals, and blow the whole thing? Excuse me! I'm not throwing cases over my shoulder so recklessly."

"But how will you fix them, then?"

"By my own tools, working blindly."

"I leave it to you, Midge," said the colonel, with a shake of the head. "Egad! I'm going this thing almost as blindly as your other tools?"

"On better pay," hinted Mr. Midge, blowing a ring of smoke.

"Well, you are square in that particular," admitted the colonel.

"It's honor among thieves," explained Mr. Midge, placidly.

The colonel made a wry face, but said nothing.

So the night came, and the Terpsichorean Hall was ablaze, and overflowing with the sounds of revelry.

Of all present, not one danced with a merrier abandon than Judge Owney Maglochlin. Ah! but he did the owd sod honor that night! And where was a blither laugh than his, or a slyer wink as he chuckled his partners under the chin, with speeches that come so readily only to lips that have kissed the Blarney Stone?

Who was it that put it into his head to drink every one of a select party stone blind? The competitors he selected included the attorneys, Jim Gladden and several other leading men of the camp, and Isaac Salomans.

He would have added the young deputy to the list, but Harry said no with a firmness that won the respect of even the rattlebrained Irishman.

"Well, me b'y," he said, clapping his hand on Harry's shoulder, "I like to see a mon that can put his fut down and kape it thayre. Thayre's the right stuff in yez, wan way o' spakin', but this here's the right stuff for Owney Maglochlin, an' don't ye forget it!"

Salomans was especially suspicious of this night; but, having particularly charged his men to vigilance, and with Cale and Banty also on the watch, what had he to fear?

Still he resolved to be temperate. He would sham drunkenness, if necessary, to prevent the merry judge from filling him up.

But Salomans "counted without his host," literally. That host was Dinny McGee, and Dinny McGee was devoted to the Three Jolly Pards.

"Faith! aren't the young imps the favorite institutions o' the place? An' thayre's the Pride o' Paddy's Flat, God bless her swate pictur'! Is yan' spaldeen to step in an' cl'an out the camp intirely? Bod luck till his ugly mug, it's Dinny McGee that's the b'y to fix 'um!"

And he did "fix" Mr. Salomans, having the handling of the liquor he drank.

Outside similar precautions were being taken. A sweetheart of one of the men in Salomans's employ—of course Colonel Blood knew them all—was bought over in the interest of the beautiful Jewess, or perhaps it would be more correct to say in the interests of the young deputy. All the world loves a lover; and, sure, wasn't it Kitty Terryl that had pronounced Harry "a broth o' a b'y!"

"Be me sowl, Pat, darlant," she declared, having crept out to where her lover and his fellow-watchers were listening wistfully to the sounds of revel that came from the Terpsichorean Hall, "what is it but a shame that you b'y's should be out here in the cold an' dairness, when thayre's such rare sport a-going? Faith, I've brought yez a sup by way of consolation."

"God bless you, Kitty Terryl!" cried honest Pat, as the girl produced two bottles from under her apron. "Whist, b'y's! here's rare luck! It's not the rough-on-rats that Dinny McGee sells us

poor devils fur whisky, but it's some o' the r'ale owd stuff!"

"And why not?" cried Kitty, with fine scorn in her voice. "Are there foiner gentlemen in yander than out here? Dhrink hearty, b'y's. It's the shany's money that pays for it."

They needed no prompting. The bottles passed round until they were as dry as squeezing and sucking could make them.

But Dinny McGee had had hand at "fixing" these two, under the direction of no less skilled a person than Doc Sawyer, who had returned boldly to the camp. He knew that he was a handy man to have about, where pistols and whisky were plenty. It would be useless to fine him—he never had any money; and the boys couldn't afford to let him go to prison.

By twelve o'clock, all of Isaac Salomans's trusted watchers had succumbed to the sedative effect of the "r'ale owd stuff" that Kitty Terryl had so kindly brought them, while indoors Isaac Salomans himself was sleeping the sleep of the just beside Judge Owney Maglochlin and not a few others.

And what of Cale and Banty? There was no one to fetch them liquor. But there was a man with the stealthiness, the agility and the strength of a mountain cat, who crept upon them in the darkness.

A blow, and Cale Burchard lay stunned. A rush, and Banty was in the clutches of an unseen antagonist. He fought like a demon, believing that he and his partner were detected, and were to be handed over to the hangman. But he was choked into insensibility, and then bound and gagged along with his comrade.

Then forth from Abraham's back door crept a little knot of shadowy figures—only Tom Murphy, Dick Johnson, and the trembling Miriam. A murmur, a sob, and the door closed noiselessly again. Then all was deathlike silence.

How did they ride that night? Where did they go? In an agony of suspense, Harry himself did not know.

Before supper he had parted with Miriam, clinging to her hands, gazing into her eyes, and striving to stimulate her wavering courage. During all the evening he remained at the Terpsichorean Hall, so that Jim Gladden should know that he was not directly implicated.

In the morning the camp was treated to a little comedy. Abraham went raging up and down the street, tearing his beard and hair, and denouncing Isaac Salomans.

He declared that the latter, not relying upon the issue of a fair trial, had robbed him of his child. He had gone to bed suspecting nothing. In the morning he had risen to find his home desolated. In the silence of the night, emissaries of this arch villain had stolen in and abducted the flower of his life. Even Rebecca joined her husband, wringing her hands and moaning.

Of course everybody knew that this was all humbug. But the boys roared with laughter to see how the old fraud tried to turn the tables on his son-in-law. Even judge Owney Maglochlin, when he had had his head under the pump, and had brightened himself up with his morning "snifter," laughed and shook his finger at the deputy marshal, calling him a "young divil," to outwit them all so.

But Harry protested his innocence, and after looking him steadily in the eye, Jim Gladden believed him, in spite of appearances, and whatever any one else might think.

Jim was humiliated. He had undertaken to see that Abraham did not defeat the ends of justice if Harry performed his duty. Harry had kept his pledge, yet the girl was gone.

Isaac Salomans was furious. He went to his watchers. But Kitty Terryl had roused her lover before daybreak, and he had wakened his companions. They declared to a man that no one had approached or left the house that night. To screen themselves they started the theory that the girl had been taken from her home three days before, while the court was passing upon her supposed illness.

Jim Gladden and his men knew better than this, but they said nothing.

In all the crowd, the most innocent-looking persons were Dick Johnson and Tom Murphy, who had got back before daybreak. But they were not idle. They moved about in the crowd, dropping a word here and there, and before long it began to appear that the temper of the crowd was undergoing a change.

Suddenly a great shout arose, and the young deputy appeared carried on the shoulders of some of his enthusiastic admirers. He was borne up and down the street with yells and laughter. The boys began to feel that the Pride of Paddy's

Flat was being persecuted, and that the young deputy had outwitted a father whom she did not care to welcome.

Of a sudden a great uproar arose. The whole crowd rushed toward a common center, and a fierce struggle ensued, in which men tumbled over one another, and arms and legs interwoven indiscriminately.

Forth from this mass of writhing humanity issued a man, running as men only run for their lives, his hat gone, his clothes torn, and a streak of blood across his ghastly face.

It was Salomans, pursued by a howling mob!

A moment later, and he stood panting, and swallowing spasmodically, to relieve the pain in his throat where a hand of iron had gripped it, while between him and his pursuers appeared Jim Gladden with drawn revolvers.

"Hold on, men!" shouted the marshal. "You're all my friends, I hope, an' I should hate to lay any of you out; but that'll be a few dead men around hyar before another hand is laid on this hyar man. Right or wrong, he's stood by the law, and now the law'll stand by him."

In a twinkling another took his place beside bold Jim. It was his deputy.

"No friend of mine goes any further in this matter," he said. "Maybe I haven't set you a very law-abiding example, but surely we have no further use for lynch-law with a regular court sitting in our very midst."

"Boys, the thing's off," shouted a stentorian voice. "It is a leetle rough on the court. But we'll jest bow this hyar chap out o' the camp, an' invite him to forgit the way back. Thar can't be no harm in that."

And the crowd compromised on these lines.

Salomans was escorted to the outskirts of the camp, and there bade godspeed, with a hint that that wasn't a healthy section for one of his delicate constitution.

At a distance from the camp, he was joined by his confederates. They had been released before daylight, and told to "git."

"We don't give ye away this deal, boys," said the man who had laid them out, repeating blindly the words that the Honorable Mr. Midge had put into his mouth, "but ef we ketch you loafin' about hyar again, it's yer own neral. Take a fool's advice, Git, an' stay got!"

Believing that their disguise had been penetrated, they were at a loss to surmise why they had been let off. But the thing wore a sinister aspect. When an enemy forbears, look out!

So the baffled plotters were a sorry lot all round, and did not improve one another's temper.

That afternoon the court adjourned and went its way. The attorneys counted their fees with complacency. The judge was as serene as a May morning.

The shadows of night had scarcely fallen, when suddenly there bloomed forth a demonstration which evidently had been prepared beforehand.

All one end of the camp was ablaze with light, while the air rung with cheer on cheer. Then a stream of men, all bearing torches, came pouring down the one street.

In their midst an equestrian group formed a center for all eyes.

In the van rode a girl, vailed as heretofore, but evidently young and beautiful, as the elegant contour and graceful movements of her body showed.

On her right rode Tom Murphy, and on her left Dick Johnson; and this was the proudest hour of their lives.

They drew rein before old Abraham's door, where Harry, the young deputy marshal, supported the trembling figure of Rebecca, while Abraham stood with bared head, tears of grateful joy streaming down his cheeks.

It was Harry who lifted the restored Miriam from her saddle, and placed her in the arms of her kindred. In that momentary half embrace, he only murmured her name, so low that she alone heard; but it was enough.

Abraham essayed to thank his fellow townsmen, but broke down, and could only bow his gratitude.

When the boys chaffed Jim Gladden, he laughed.

"It's all right, boys. I tried to do my duty, as I would ag'in; but the Jolly Pards got away with me. I'm free to say I don't bear 'em no ill-will, an' hyar's my hand on it."

Harry received the hand modestly, but told Jim that he must settle the matter with his pards.

So all was happiness once more. The Jolly Pards had triumphed.

THE END.

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